UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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**SETTLER MODERNISM:**
**ALFRED STIEGLITZ'S *THE STEERAGE* AND THE VICISSITUDES OF WHITENESS, 1890-1930**

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of the requirements for the degree of

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by
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# Abstract

Settler Modernism:
Alfred Stieglitz's *The Steerage* and the Vicissitudes of Whiteness, 1890-1930
by Jordan Reznick

*Settler Modernism* traces how Stieglitz's iconic photograph, *The Steerage* (1907) came to be known as the first modernist American photograph and how, at each stage of its trajectory into the modernist canon, it was interpreted through settler colonial narratives that served to naturalize whites' ongoing presence on occupied territories in the twentieth century. Though studies of settler visual cultures typically concentrate on events surrounding acts of colonization, I demonstrate that American modernist photography was continuous with the nineteenth-century history of photography for which settler colonialism was a structural and discursive force that framed photographic vision. I bring *The Steerage* into conversation with Stieglitz's photographs of working-class people, Manhattan, and clouds, as well as with artworks by Cézanne, Anne Brigman, Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Cole, and others. By interrogating how the camera's capacity to distort perceptions of time and land clinched whites' amnesia regarding the nation's founding violence, I show how photographs encouraged settlers to imagine themselves as the ancient inhabitants of the continent. I also thread Indigenous histories, philosophies, and visual cultures throughout the text, undermining settler logic with perspectives that make apparent its impracticability. Through concentrated examination of *The Steerage*'s history, I shed light on how settler colonialism was not only central to the emergence of American modernism, but also to emergent conceptions of white racial identity that followed the closing of the frontier.

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Figure 1. *The Vanishing Race*, by Edward S. Curtis, 1904.

Figure 2. *The Steerage*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1907, as it appeared in *Camera Work*, no. 36 (1910).

# Introduction: Making The Steerage Modern

Edward S. Curtis's *The Vanishing Race* (figure 1, 1904) and Alfred Stieglitz's *The Steerage* (figure 2, 1907) paired together juxtapose two populations precariously situated at the margins of the modernizing American nation at the turn of the century: Indians and immigrants. The Indians in Curtis's photograph dwell at its westernmost imaginary, riding solemnly into the sunset of the nation, and conveniently "vanishing" somewhere into its vast interior. In contrast, the depicted immigrants appear at the nation's eastern border. Their Old World attire set against the shiny steel shapes of the Atlantic ocean liner make apparent their "alien" status. Rather than vanish, they proliferate across the picture plane en route to becoming modern subjects. The two images offer one delineation of the boundaries of the nation and Americanness itself—the exogenous others against which the core of America gains its definition. Alan Trachtenberg describes the simultaneous appearance of such imagery at the turn of the century as signifying the era's "obsessive need to decipher separately and in relation to each other" the meanings of "Indian," "immigrant," and "American" identities.[1] Within the white American imagination, Indians and immigrants are each anti-modern figures through and against which a still-fledgling and uncertain modern American identity emerged at the turn of the century.

The images also mark a temporal boundary in American photography, as one mode of conveying photographic "facts" gave way to another. Though Curtis's photographs appear overtly romantic to twenty-first century audiences, his

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[1] Alan Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 10.

contemporaries described the images as historical "records" of "physiognomy, ceremonies and environment" that would "enable future students to solve the mystery of a race which offered its choice between civilization and annihilation deliberately has courted the latter."[2] What today appears as misty sentimentalism was regarded as a straightforward laying out of visual facts that could be "read" by future generations of scientists who would never be able meet "real" Indians. In other words, what might today seem like a highly coded use of lighting and composition to construct a preconceived notion, was instead regarded as truthful presentation of valuable anthropological data.[3]

In comparison, *The Steerage*'s disorganized composition and contrasty lighting do not clearly indicate an intended meaning. Bodies and angular steel shapes press into every area of the frame with no clear visual hierarchy. While ordinary early-twentieth-century Americans readily made sense of Curtis's photographs of Indians, one had to be trained in the latest European modern arts to see in *The Steerage* what Stieglitz's milieu came to regard as a "poetry" achieved through the fusion of man and machine.[4] Avant-garde artist Marius de Zayas claimed visual mechanization was the primary merit of *The Steerage,* for the mechanical view upon bare visual facts had finally freed art from the "tyranny" of "Conventional Beauty."[5] Though the two photographs circulated in different discursive arenas—Curtis's in the ethnographic and popular and Stieglitz's in the arts

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[2] Gustave Kobbe, "Stalking the Indian with Camera and Phonograph," *The San Francisco Sunday Call,* August 20, 1911.

[3] Nineteenth century anthropologists and institutions commonly collected staged commercial tourist and expedition photographs of indigenous people for research and teaching purposes. Melissa Banta and Curtis M. Hinsley, *From Site to Sight: Anthropology, Photography, and the Power of Imagery* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Peabody Museum Press, 2017), 38-47.

[4] Paul Haviland, *291*, no 7/8 (September-October 1915).

[5] Marius de Zayas, *291*, no 7/8 (September-October 1915).

avant-garde—their significance each relied upon the camera's perceived relationship to reality. Their comparison thus highlights a shift in photography demarcated by the turn of the century. While Curtis's photographic "truth" would gradually come to seem as outdated as his subject matter, Stieglitz's photograph would gain reputation as pioneering a new and direct relationship between the camera and truth. Following Stieglitz's efforts to define modernism in photography, the art photograph would come to seem *more true* than science—less confined by convention and more directly in contact with its subject. In other words, it was not Curtis's Indians, but Curtis's conception of photographic truth that was dying off, to be replaced by new notions of what constituted an unfettered photographic truth.

Similarly, I propose that these photographs demonstrate not only subject matter of anxious concern to the settler colonial nation's unstable identity after the closing of the frontier, but also demonstrate that the development of a new photographic language that proposed a more direct and "straight" relationship to facts was similarly coded with ideologies of anxious concern to settler identity.

By tracing *The Steerage*'s route into the modernist canon as the "first" American modernist photograph, my project investigates how modernist American photography continued the settler colonial visual cultural project in the twentieth century. I argue that the milestone modernist photograph that came to be known as *The Steerage* was not initially such. *The Steerage* instead emerged over the course of two decades during which Stieglitz, his changing milieus, and art photography's publics came to understand it as a modernist masterpiece. In 1907 however, the photograph was nameless and its arrangement of visual facts incomprehensible to most viewers. The image that materialized in Stieglitz's developing bath in 1907 was one that Stieglitz literally could

not make sense of. He discarded the print into the piles of rejected prints that his wife Georgia O'Keeffe called Stieglitz's "waste basket."[6] Later narratives that made sense of the image after its "discovery" in 1910 accumulated to the photograph making it appear as if *The Steerage* of the 1920s and the photograph made in 1907 were always the same image. I argue that in fact three different images—the products of discrete amalgamations of visual facts and ideological narratives at particular moments in time—can be discerned during the two decades of *The Steerage*'s becoming. This dissertation tells the story of how a discarded photograph became *The Steerage* that anchored American photography to modernism.

To do so I chart Stieglitz's evolving perception of the image within shifting historical contexts and changing artistic milieus. While *The Steerage* is typically read by art historians as evidence of both the representation of class difference and a clear turning point in art photography toward incorporating the modernist aesthetic techniques of its day, I argue that such a perception was not readily available to Stieglitz at the time of its making and therefore not a likely way to understand the photograph. Instead two significant ideological shifts in the early twentieth century caused the photograph's significance to change: the aesthetic language of art photography and racialized perceptions of European immigrants in America. While art photography's discourses allowed the photograph to move from visual gibberish in one historical moment to "direct" and avant-garde abstraction in another, heightened popular discourse about immigration permitted the photograph's subjects to appear as racialized Others in one

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[6] Though O'Keeffe and Stieglitz were not married until after this date, the "waste basket" designation was O'Keeffe's description for the piles of discarded prints Stieglitz habitually kept around his studio. Georgia O'Keeffe's "Waste Basket Collection," box 146, Alfred Stieglitz and Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Hereafter YCAL.

moment and proto-whites in the process of becoming American in another. Rather than regard changes in the aesthetic and connotative interpretation of the image as parallel but distinct processes, I demonstrate how settler colonialism's penchant for utilizing photography to naturalize settler narratives as objective truths was critical to the photograph's eventual formal legibility. Shifts in attitudes about immigration during the 1920s made the aesthetic liberation promised by modernism at the turn of the century finally fit the subject matter of the image—immigrants who retrospectively appeared bound to flourish in the Land of the Free. It was the merger of these freedoms that finally allowed the image to "feel" intensely and directly "true" to Stieglitz, ripening it for a rhetorical transformation to become an origin myth of photographic modernism.

I propose that the interpretive methodologies of settler colonial studies for analyzing the construction of history make clear how Stieglitz's myth was in fact a settler usable past. Stieglitz's origin story was characteristic of a broader American movement to construct "usable pasts"—versions of history infused with myth intended to reorient society toward utopian ideals. During the midcentury historian Warren I. Susman noted that following the 1890s closing of the frontier, American artists and intellectuals—particularly those of Stieglitz's innermost circle—dedicated their efforts to creating usable pasts. Believing that American society needed guidance, they sought to amplify the role of artists and writers in American life to usher in a desirable future for the nation.[7] Scholars of settler colonialism have since expanded upon Susman's observations, analyzing the mythical function of history in settler colonial societies. Lorenzo Veracini describes how the settler nation continually construes itself as the rightful and virtuous

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7 Warren I. Susman, "History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Usable Past," *American Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1964): 243–63.

occupant of the land, concealing the founding acts of Indigenous genocide and dispossession. Historical discourse in settler societies therefore performs what Veracini terms a "narrative transfer." These narrative transfers do the ideological work of transferring rightful ownership to settlers, while simultaneously legitimating and erasing the state's history and continued violence. Narrative transfers frequently establish a racial discourse that "indigenizes" white settlers as the true occupants of the land while racializing various other groups as not properly belonging in the settlement.[8] Many of these perceptual transfers involve paradoxes that conceptualize the settler community as arriving prior to First Nation peoples by framing settlement as a spiritual "return" rather than a colonizing arrival. Such narratives describe Europeans' arrival in North America as an escape from oppression followed by a homecoming in which settlers finally experienced the freedoms denied to them in the Old World. Couched in such ideology *The Steerage* came to seem like a record of myths about a "nation of immigrants" that submerged the violent founding of the nation within the innocence of humble immigrants' hope for freedom from oppression.

I will illustrate that, whereas Stieglitz's photograph might today appear to be neither sentimental nor steeped in settler mythos like Curtis's exaggerated scenes, it in fact pointedly romanticized a settler version of American history. Stieglitz's 1920s narrative about *The Steerage* would claim that the photograph was composed of shapes saturated with "the deepest human feeling" inspired singularly by the sight of "common people" who hoped to become Americans.[9] As the image made its way into the history of modernism, its immigrants came to seem like the innocent and humble ancestors of

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[8] Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 42-46.

[9] Alfred Stieglitz, "How *The Steerage* Happened," *Twice a Year*, no. 8/9 (1942):127-131.

modern whites. *The Steerage*'s myth was thus one that was doubled and paradoxical in ways common to the American project with its penchant for "firsts" to legitimate it—it was both proposed as the first modernist American photograph and twisted into an origin story for America itself. This dissertation demonstrates that modernist fine art photography was from its inception inscribed within a settler visual cultural project.

## *The Steerage*'s Becoming

*The Steerage* pictures in sharp detail European immigrants from different national origins crowded on the third-class decks of the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* ocean liner as it made its transatlantic voyage to Europe in May of 1907. Its subject matter of immigration and global travel associate it with the modern age. Amongst the angular architectural forms, the pictured immigrants pass tedious long hours of the voyage in accommodations that appear ill-suited to human comfort. The inhumane conditions of ship steerages commonly appeared in journalistic exposés and social reform photography during its era. Social reform photographer Lewis Hine frequently chose to focus on the humanity of the steerage's passengers, such as in *Italian Family Looking for Lost Baggage, Ellis Island* (figure 3, 1905) in which the title serves to underline the troubled faces of the family of four departing their tiring steerage journey with a scant two bags of belongings. Viewers of the era would have connected the family's distress to the common knowledge that the future ahead of these immigrants was one of slums and sweatshops. Other photographers (figure 4, 1906) chose to make evident the brutal traveling conditions, highlighting the mind-boggling overcrowding of steerage accommodations. However *The Steerage* was not

Figure 3. *Italian Family Looking for Lost Baggage*, Ellis Island, by Lewis Hine, 1905.


Figure 4. *Immigrants on an Atlantic Liner,* by Edmund Levick, 1906.

composed for such purposes. Its sharp focus and bold geometric forms rendered with strongly contrasting shadows and highlights today associate the image with the avant-garde modern arts of the twentieth century. According to modernist concerns, the image did not apply pressure to the problems of social inequity, but pushed upon the aesthetic bounds by which photography might be recognized as a legitimate fine art. It is regarded as a challenge to the fuzzy sentimental aesthetics of pictorialist photography with its "straight" depiction of visual facts—an aesthetics of brazen honesty associated with American "straight talk."[10]

*The Steerage* was first encountered in an arts context as a delicate photogravure tipped into the October 1910 issue of *Camera Work*, an arts photography journal that Stieglitz edited and published himself. The entire October issue was dedicated to Stieglitz's most modern photographs to date. Most of the photographs pictured urban forms that had previously been regarded as unfit for the refined tastes of the fine arts—skyscrapers, ships, trains, aircraft, and city streets. It appeared ninth in a series of sixteen photogravures—arguably not a place of particular prominence in the series. It was this 1910 gravure that Picasso later admired in 1914 when he reportedly stated that Stieglitz was "the only one who has understood photography." That praise marked a turn in Stieglitz's own regard for the photograph and its singular position as the photograph that he would eventually herald as the most important of his career.[11] Over the next decades Stieglitz would make a new gravure and then silver gelatin prints that slightly altered the emphasis of the image. It would be circulated not only in the refined setting of *Camera*

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[10] Lauren Kroiz, *Creative Composites: Modernism, Race, and the Stieglitz Circle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 12.

[11] De Zayas to Stieglitz, June 11, 1914, reprinted in Marius de Zayas and Francis M. Nauman, *How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 177.

*Work* and the 291 Gallery, but also later in his An American Place gallery that branded artists as common American laborers, in *Vanity Fair* magazine, and as a verbal narrative in Dorothy Norman's literary journal *Twice a Year*. These subsequent framings of the photograph similarly altered its emphasis—associating it with pioneering and an affinity for common Americans and cementing its place in the canon of American photography.

My own interest in the image was sparked by the manner in which Stieglitz sometimes referred to it as a snapshot, terminology that questions the common understanding that Stieglitz fought for photography's place in the arts by distinguishing art photography from that of thoughtless amateurs. As I explore in the dissertation, "snapshot" had several meanings for Stieglitz, shifting from the time of the Kodak's invention when the mere thought of snapshots "sickened" him until the end of his life when he printed his own crowning series, *The Equivalents*, on Kodak paper marketed to amateur snapshot photographers in an effort to prove that his straightforward photographs could be made by any common person.[12] The snapshot was a photographic Other against which and through which modernist photography itself was defined. Neither the Kodak snapshot nor the modernist photograph had preordained formal and signifying rules, but were instead genres whose meanings co-evolved during the same period, staking out their ideological territory and jettisoning their undesirables. As Stieglitz's conception of the snapshot transformed, so too did *The Steerage.* The photograph's plural meanings cannot be adequately contained within one, internally consistent photograph, but within three—the sketch discarded in the "waste basket," the

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12 Dorothy Norman, "From the Writings and Conversations of Alfred Stieglitz," *Twice a Year,* no. 1 (Fall-Winter 1938): 95; Stieglitz printed *The Equivalents* on Eastman Kodak postcard stock. Richard Whelan, *Stieglitz on Photography: His Selected Essays and Notes* (New York: Aperture, 2000), 240.

gravure that forged photography's relationship to the modern arts emerging from Paris, and then an image framed by narrative mythologies of Stieglitz as photographer-pioneer.

Not surprisingly, the becoming of *The Steerage* did not occur in isolation from other significant shifts in Stieglitz's artistic development, broader movements within modern art, or seismic racial and cultural shifts in American society. However *The Steerage* itself was singular in its capacity to be continuously revised in ways that reflected all of these changes, perhaps accounting somewhat for Stieglitz's fondness for it at the end of his life; not only did the photograph secure his desired place as the father of photography, but it exemplified the ideological flexibility the artist himself demonstrated through the decades. There are certain elements of the image that made it singularly able to shift meaning in ways that other images in Stieglitz's oeuvre could not: its subject matter of European immigrants served as a screen for racial fantasies about the immigrant Other as well as shifting notions of white settler identity. But perhaps most important was its unusual composition. Nearly every area of the photograph is filled with interesting subject matter—people, gazes, social interactions, bold nautical forms—that engages viewers. Its composition does not suggest an easy place for the eye to settle. It therefore was distinct from typical photographs—art or otherwise—in that its composition did not suggest an overt or premeditated narrative that viewers were accustomed to apprehending in photographs. Its meaning could therefore be updated by Stieglitz over the years—it served as a screen for the vicissitudes of his own desires, beliefs, and notions.

That Stieglitz himself could make *The Steerage* into one image and then another harkens to John Tagg's thesis that there is no necessary relationship between a given photograph and its meaning, but instead that a photograph gains its meaning through

conscious and unconscious processes that manipulate facts at every step of an image's making and circulation.[13] Made on a ship moored in the Atlantic between Europe and America as Stieglitz gazed from the first-class deck into the steerage; made after the closing of the frontier, published during the height of modernist Primitivism, and gaining distinction after the First World War—*The Steerage* was at every step in its trajectory a product of racial, national, and colonial fantasies. It is important to analyze the photograph as a mutable agent that became meaningful—and persuasively so—in contact with the tectonic cultural changes of the first decades of the twentieth century. This dissertation situates the historical becoming of *The Steerage* in relationship to national histories of settler colonialism and global histories of colonialism in which the immigrants on the ship and modernism itself were entangled.

I situate Stieglitz's practice within the framework of "settler modernism" to indicate how Stieglitz and his milieu navigated anxieties about national identity in ways that linked their modernist modes to those that emerged in other settler societies. The term has previously been used by antipodean scholars to analyze modernism in Australia and New Zealand as a means of "aesthetic colonization."[14] Nicolas Thomas argues that modernist primitivist appropriations of aboriginal visual cultures produced symbols of national identity that imagined white settlers as native to the occupied continent. With artists' dual assimilation of both European avant-garde primitivist abstraction and local aboriginal aesthetics, Thomas asserts that antipodean modernism expressed a

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[13] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 1-5, 63.

[14] Nicholas Thomas, *Possessions: Indigenous Art, Colonial Culture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 21.

characteristic settler ambivalence toward European and indigenous cultures.[15] Meanwhile Melinda Cooper elaborates that settler anxieties appeared in Australian modernism even in the absence of overt appropriation of aboriginal cultural production. Cooper argues that modernist writers and artists also appropriated forms of the settlement's own middlebrow and popular culture. The vernacular aesthetic that emerged served to indigenize settlers by creating what was perceived as an authentic homegrown national identity.[16] These authors demonstrate that even as settler artists turned toward European avant-garde influences, they continued to voice concerns particular to the settlement in their aesthetic practices.

Parallel trends can be found in American modernism: Artists made apparent their negotiation settler identity both in the presence and absence of appropriation from local Indigenous cultures. Elizabeth Hutchinson's examination of American modernist primitivism details the means by which American artists demonstrated a fascination with Indigenous visual and material culture at the turn of the century.[17] My investigation picks up on Hutchinson's mention of Stieglitz at the conclusion of her study, where she notes that, as Stieglitz and his milieu turned Americans' tastes to the avant-garde modernism of Europe, fascination with Indian arts became associated with tradition and pastness in distinction from the drive toward "progress" that characterized the early

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[15] Thomas, *Possessions,* 12-14; See also, Nicholas Thomas, "Appropriation/Appreciation: Settler Modernism in Australia and New Zealand," in *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*, ed. Fred R. Myers (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2001), 139–63.

[16] Melinda Cooper, "'Adjusted' Vision: Interwar Settler Modernism in Eleanor Dark's *Return to Coolami*," *Australian Literary Studies* 33, no. 2 (July 9, 2018): 2.

[17] Elizabeth. Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915*, Objects/Histories: Critical Perspectives on Art, Material Culture, and Representation (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

twentieth century.[18] In correlation with Cooper's investigation, I argue that settler identity continued to determine the formation of American modernist aesthetics even in the absence of primitivism that drew upon Indigenous material cultures. As white American artists adopted and adapted aesthetic strategies of the European avant-garde, their work necessarily negotiated a host of anxieties related to both Europe and the ongoing formation of an authentic American identity. *Settler Modernism* therefore investigates how American modernism symbolized frontier concepts of progress and freedom to reimagine the national space and its populations after the closing of the frontier; and in so doing the project opens a field of inquiry for linking American modernism to art movements of other settler nations.

Chapter one follows the early era of Stieglitz's career, from his education in Berlin to his initial attempts to spark a vibrant center of amateur photography in New York. Looking carefully at the beginnings of Stieglitz's role in fomenting a turn from the softly-focused sentimental images of pictorialism to the straight photography of modernism, I set the stage for apprehending what Stieglitz perceived at the moment he made the photograph that would later be called *The Steerage* and what he found distasteful in the initial test print that he cast aside. Scholars who regard *The Steerage* (1907) as central to the turn from pictorialism to straight photography frequently draw at least some elements of their analysis from Stieglitz's 1920s and 1930s memory of taking the photograph. Finding Stieglitz's account entirely fictitious, I reserve Stieglitz's narrative for its appropriate place in the final chapter, and instead situate my initial analyses within historical accounts contemporaneous to the image's making. Tracing Stieglitz's adoption of handheld photographic technology, his early ethnographic approach to art

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[18] Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze,* 220.

photography, and experiments with a picturesque "snapshot aesthetic," I demonstrate that the photograph belonged to an emergent modern American settler aesthetic that attempted to situate the post-frontier modernizing nation within a timeless ancient history in which European immigrants represented timeworn racial order in which traditional lifestyles were segregated from the encroachments of modernity.

Chapter two traces the middle period of Stieglitz's career, beginning with his arrival in Paris in 1907 when he was first exposed to artwork by European modernists such as Cézanne, Picasso, and Matisse. The present-day understanding of *The Steerage* as a modernist photograph dealing with abstraction is colored by Stieglitz's concerted efforts during this period to link his own projects to European primitivist modernism and Picasso's 1914 praise for *The Steerage.* I question the connections typically drawn between *The Steerage* and cubism, regarding such links to be so frequently repeated that they retrospectively came to seem natural and inevitable. I instead consider this to be a period of *The Steerage*'s becoming when the public and Stieglitz himself were trained to see the image as ontologically linked to formal exercises in abstraction. I trace Stieglitz's evolving understanding of the image through the discursive web into which the photograph first materialized as a work of art: the theories about art, psychology, and temporality published in *Camera Work*; exhibitions of European and American art staged at 291, the Photo-Secession gallery; and artwork published in *Camera Work.* I also examine in detail aspects not previously used to analyze *The Steerage*: Stieglitz's drastically shifting estimation of Cézanne's watercolors, his fostering of white California photographer Anne Brigman, and subtle differences between two photogravure prints he made of *The Steerage* during this period. I argue that Stieglitz's importation of European modernism to America was characterized by the settler's profoundly ambivalent relationship to Europe.

As he absorbed modernism's conceptions of the "primitive" which included corporeal vision, nonlinear temporality, intuition, and the Unconscious, he also transformed these concepts in ways that were particular to settler subjectivity, resulting in what I term "settler primitivism." This emergent form of modernist primitivism imagined that photographers exhibited an ancient corporeal and spiritual relationship to the American territory that was consistent with settler myths that the settler is in fact indigenous to the landscape.

Stieglitz's late-in-life remembrance of "How *The Steerage* Happened" finally appears in chapter three, when I explore the 1920s moment during which Stieglitz imagined and promoted the image as the dawning spark of modernist photography. Rather than an actual memory, Stieglitz's story was a settler origin myth that retrospectively understood the ethnically-diverse immigrants on the ship as white Americans racially bound together by ethereal rather than biological ties. By examining Stieglitz's narrative about *The Steerage* as well as the writings of his 1920s milieu of American modernists and the *Equivalents* series that he produced during the latter period of his career, I reveal previously misunderstood connections between the immigrants that appear in the 1907 image and the racial narratives through which Stieglitz understood immigration by the 1920s. I argue that the immigrants on the ship came to stand for a conception of monolithic American whiteness that became popular after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924. Monolithic whiteness integrated European immigrants into its fold in a nostalgic reimagining of myths about the Revolutionary era birth of the "American race."

This chapter also answers Damian Skinner's call for a settler colonial art history that brings settler art into conversation with indigenous art even when they belong to

seemingly disconnected worlds in order to counteract the "amnesia and invisibility that are central to settler colonialism."[19] I examine Stieglitz's narratives about his photographs together with Revolutionary era myths and relevant Indigenous philosophy, history, and visual culture. This comparison exposes how settler visual culture overwrites practical Indigenous knowledge regarding governance and ecology with spiritual truths purportedly born of the frontier—a central ideological component of genocide and dispossession. By reading Stieglitz's notion of modernist abstraction together with settler usable pasts that abstract histories from lived facts, I demonstrate that his 1920s description of *The Steerage* as "shapes" suffused with his "deepest feelings about life" was a form of abstraction continuous with the nineteenth century photography's role in overwriting indigenous knowledge. In this case immigrants were detached from their actual historical conditions and made to signify settlers' legendary "capacity for self-governance" that suited them to the power they would enjoy on occupied national territory.

## Settler Photography

My project proposes that Stieglitz's modernist photography was part the fabric of "settler photography," a specific discursive formation of photography that naturalized settler narratives in the United States beginning with photography's invention during an

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19 Damian Skinner, "Settler-Colonial Art History: A Proposition in Two Parts," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 35, no. 1 (2014): 141-167; This strategy of reading Stieglitz's photographs side by side with Haudenosaunee material culture and knowledge also importantly allows me to bring the voices of Indian scholars to bear on the analysis of The Steerage, without which a settler colonial analysis of the image would surely be incomplete.

era of territorial expansion and genocide. John Tagg uses the term "photographies" to describe the various ways in which the technology of photography has been put to use for ideological functions within specific historical contexts since its invention. Integral to the establishment of each discursive field of photography is a specific mode of distorting facts before the lens accompanied by truth claims that viewers are trained to believe.[20] The designation of "settler photography" unifies different modes of photographic distortions employed variously by scientific, landscape, portrait, and art photographers in service of settler ideology. These different pictorial modes naturalized the settler's idealized perspective on the land and the people who occupied it, while also—and importantly—technologically marked the nation as aligned with the inevitable progression of time toward modern civilization by picturing it with mechanical means.

I propose that modernist photography was a pivotal actualization of the settler project—the modernist camera's view was at once mechanistic, aesthetically liberated, and temporally distanced from literal acts of genocide and dispossession. The fact that it is not self-evidently related the violent project of settlement makes it seem deceptively divorced from other settler photographic projects. As Philip Deloria explains in *Indians in Unexpected Places* one of the fundamental aspects of settler-indigenous relations is the fact that "real" indigenous people are not supposed to be seen in settler domains.[21] One logical extension of this claim is that settler visuality plays a role in constructing every picture in which Indians are not visible. Though it is not a productive exercise to identify settler ideology "everywhere" in visual culture, acknowledgment of the manufacture of indigenous absence builds upon Patrick Wolfe's influential conclusion that settler

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[20] Tagg, *The Burden of Representation,* 63-65.

[21] Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 5-7.

"invasion is a structure, not an event."[22] His thesis demands an investigation of the ideological work performed by settler visual cultures seemingly disconnected from the processes by which the nation was founded. Veracini extends Wolfe's thesis to emphasize that settler colonialism's present-day power is strengthened by its core disavowal, which displaces the events of settlement as happening in other times and places that are out of sight.[23] Modernism in America was certainly one such present—the apparent culmination of the inevitable march of civilization that sealed the fate of Curtis's Indians as a "vanishing race." As Indians were displaced out of sight, the modernist camera helped to imagine oppressed immigrants—rather than genocidal settlers—as Americans' true ancestors. Modernist photography performed an important narrative transfer function critical to the amnesia and concealment that characterized settler photography.

The capacity of the settler camera to conceal Indigenous presence and perspective was one of the most straightforward means by which white Americans used photography to rationalize territorial occupation. Nineteenth-century landscape photographs demonstrate that settlers constructed a photographic visual language of permissible distortions and conventions fit to the settler project. The cameras of survey photographers such as Carleton E. Watkins and Timothy O'Sullivan often preceded the advancement of developed settlements on the frontier, allowing officials in the East to determine how various tracts of land would be developed. Timothy O'Sullivan's photographs, such as *Entrance to Black Cañon, Colorado River from above* (figure 5, 1871) and *Buttes near Green River City, Wyoming* (figure 6, 1872) frequently pictured wide open spaces devoid of signs of inhabitation, manufacturing factual data for settlers' belief in

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[22] Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 387.

[23] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 75-94.

Figure 5. *Entrance to Black Cañon, Colorado River from above*, by Timothy O'Sullivan, 1871.

Figure 6. *Buttes near Green River City, Wyoming*, by Timothy O'Sullivan, 1872.

*terra nullis*. Alan Trachtenberg describes how Timothy O'Sullivan deliberately framed U.S. Geological Survey photographs to make landscapes appear as empty measurable geological specimens to secure funding from Congress. The photographs thus technologically assessed and possessed the land, cutting the image of land from its history as a lived place in the Indigenous world.[24] Watkins's photographs performed related work in evaluating land for occupation. Martin Berger analyzes Watkins's *Yosemite Valley from the Best General View* (figure 7, 1866), noting that "best" in the image title referred to the fact that the photograph included a view of the Yosemite's geological features most valued by settlers, including El Capitan, Bridal Veil Falls, and Half Dome. The photograph thus assessed Yosemite as a site most valuable as a cultural resource for building national pride through tourism, rather than as site for extracting natural resources, such as a mine or tract of timber.[25] The survey camera's view therefore allowed each parcel of land night to be "read" for how it might contribute most fully to the physical and cultural expansion the American settlement. And in so doing, it also confirmed settlers' belief that their unparalleled capacity to read and use landscapes most effectively justified their right to occupy them.

The openness of the landscapes, their variations, the sheer quantity of land, also confirmed the special relationship of Americans to the frontier. Photographs performed immense ideological work to help relocate masses of strangers across oceans and mountains onto unfamiliar territory. Empty parcels and gorgeous vistas proposed that the settler encountered a land without people and history, suggesting that the settler was the

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[24] Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 125.

[25] Martin Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 61-79.

Figure 7. *Yosemite Valley from the Best General View*, by Carleton E. Watkins, 1866.

first to record it, possess it, and aesthetically appreciate it. Photographs thus disavowed indigenous presence, helping to delegitimate indigenous claims to power over their ancestral lands. They visualized the myth of the frontier as a preordained paradise of unlimited natural resources and unparalleled freedom, realizing the landscape as a site toward which the settler paradoxically both moves forward but also "returns" home to an imagined past of freedom and abundance stymied in Europe. These mythological narrative transfers appeared verifiable as bald facts in nineteenth-century photographs of open landscapes, abundant forests, and endless mountaintops.[26]

The ideological work of settlement was simultaneously performed in the portrait studio. Mathew Brady's *Gallery of Illustrious Americans* (figures 8-10, 1850) collection of daguerreotypes was framed as a moral and civic project. Brady aimed to portray the virtues of American citizens as role models.[27] His white male subjects—"The Most Eminent Citizens of the American Republic"—varied from statesmen and decorated military generals to poets and naturalists. His photographs differed from typical daguerreotypes of their day in their close-up view, relaxed countenances, and absence of artificial studio props. By closing up on each of his subjects and eliminating artifice, Brady proposed that his photographs were an honest portrayal of American citizens. Each man appeared entirely self-possessed, dignified, yet humble, qualities that were at the basis of the settlement's founding independence from Europe. Made just seventy-five years after the Declaration of Independence, these photographs demonstrated the greatness the settlement had achieved in a short span of time, affirming correctness of the

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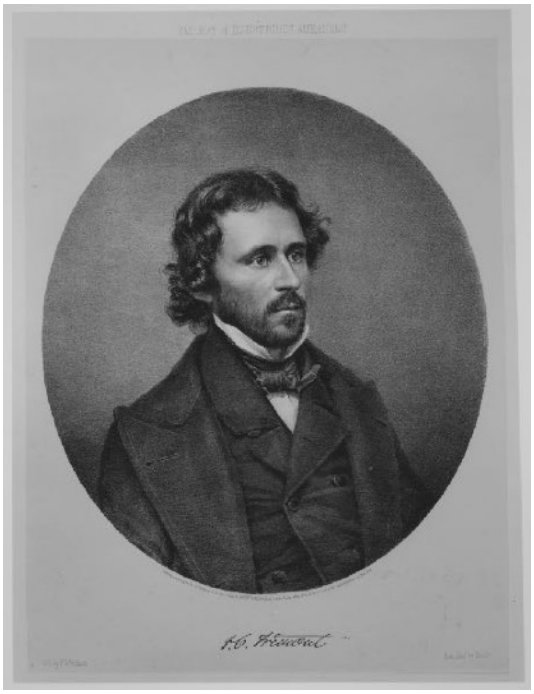
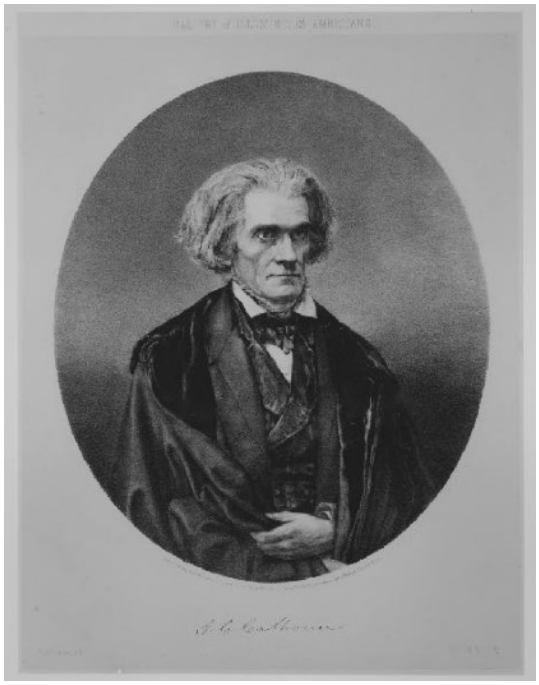
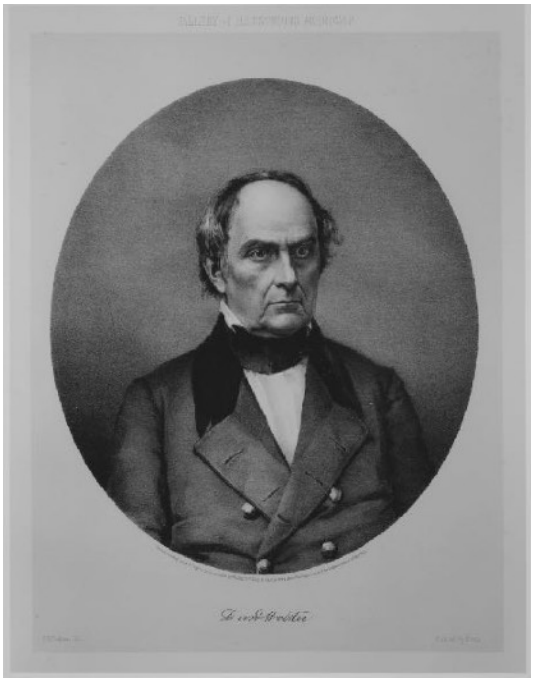
[26] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 21, 33-34, 37, 42-46, 84; Lorenzo Veracini, "Introduction: Settler Colonialism as a Distinct Mode of Domination," *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism,* Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini, eds (New York: Routledge, 2017), 6.

[27] Trachtenberg, *American Photographs,* 33-52.







Figures 8-10. (clockwise from top left) *John Charlie Freemont, John C. Calhoun*, and *Daniel Webster*, from *Gallery of Illustrious Americans,* lithographs from daguerreotypes, by Mathew Brady, 1850.

Founding Fathers' appraisal that white Americans were a virtuous race destined to construct an honorable civilized nation.

Alan Sekula describes the Rogues' Gallery of mugshots maintained by the New York Police Department as integral to constructing the meaning of the bourgeois portrait by illustrating the virtuous subject's opposite: the criminal. The scientific view of rogue subjects contrasted to the elegant portraits of successful citizens relied upon the public's trust of photographic veracity to make manipulations of photographic language appear to verify the visual assessment of interior characteristics.[28] As public exhibitions in Manhattan, the Rogues' Gallery and Brady's daguerrean gallery were both understood as places where New Yorkers might fulfill their civic duties—on the one hand by learning to identify criminal types and on the other hand by absorbing the character traits of role models. The settler camera appeared to make all the people equally and objectively visible —a technological view as democratic as the nation itself. Just as landscapes could be assessed for their differing usefulness to the nation, people too were produced as categorizable, allowing viewers to differentiate compatriots from strangers by a glance at purportedly plain visual facts.

Though survey photographs and studio portraits had distinctive visual styles, they were similar in their deployment of photography's truth effects to encourage viewers to believe they were making honest and factual assessments of subject matter. In each case such assessments confirmed the belief in the settlement's righteousness. By bringing these photographs together with modernist straight photography under the designation of settler photography, I contend that the truth claims of each photographic mode to be of

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[28] Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography,* Richard Bolton, ed. (Cambridge, Massachussetts: MIT Press, 1989), 343-389.

a cloth. I bring forward the novel kinds of photographic distortions of reality brought about by abstraction and primitivism, to examine how they too fixed settler signification to landscapes and populations that regenerated narratives of rightful occupation and virtuous citizenship.

## Stieglitz and the Vicissitudes of Whiteness

Though the immigrants Stieglitz viewed on the deck below him in 1907 had different national origins than those who had first arrived in the American colony some three hundred years prior, they likely appeared as "shuffled races" with whom he felt varying degrees of kinship during different periods of his life. Early twentieth-century writer on immigration Edward A. Steiner described the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* as holding 900 passengers "positively packed like cattle" in its steerage, while the passengers on the first-class deck enjoyed an "elegant and roomy" voyage.[29] Steiner labeled the "races" that occupied steerages as Scandanavians, Slavs, Jews, Germans, Hungarians, Greeks, and Italians.[30] These were the "races" of what is sometimes called the "Second Great Wave" of immigration. Stieglitz's own German Jewish family had arrived in the United States during the prior wave of immigration during the 1840s. Stieglitz's position in 1907 with his family on the first-class deck, looking down upon the unassimilated immigrant

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[29] Edward A. Steiner, *On the Trail of the Immigrant* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906), 35-36.

[30] Steiner, *On the Trail of the Immigrant,* 94-282.

passengers below stands as a fitting metaphor for his own ambivalent relationship of both proximity and distance to immigrants of the era.

Germans Christians who arrived in the mid-nineteenth century had more easily assimilated into American settler culture than their Irish immigrant counterparts at the time. German immigrants were mostly welcomed for their skilled labor, Teutonic heritage, and moral self-discipline, which was respected for surpassing the strictness of the Puritans.[31] Germans quickly assimilated into settler culture, frequently on the vanguard of the frontier's westward advancement. Though Stieglitz's family was not Teutonic, but Jewish, his father Edward Stieglitz, who grew up in Hanover under British rule and intense antisemitism, had decidedly abandoned Judaism and assimilated into German and Anglo-Saxon culture during his youth. Once in America, he assimilated into American culture alongside other German immigrants in Hoboken, New Jersey, fighting in the Civil War, achieving financial success, and later joining a growing urban bourgeoisie in Manhattan.[32] Alfred Stieglitz attended private Manhattan schools, attended college in Berlin, and was raised to appreciate the fine arts of Europe.[33] The identity of his youth and early career was more aligned with bourgeois culture.[34] He had little in common with the life experience of the immigrants below him on the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*'s steerage. Stieglitz frequently claimed that he did not consider himself to be Jewish, saying in a letter to Waldo Frank, "I never much thought of myself as a Jew or

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[31] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 46-48; Steiner, *On the Trail of the Immigrant,* 148.

[32] Richard Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz: A Biography* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 7-15, 28-32; Steiner, *On the Trail of the Immigrant*, 148.

[33] Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz,* 4, 33-34, 44-46, 55-59, 66-67, 75-77.

[34] William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-Garde* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977), 12-13; Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz.* 45-46, 76-77.

any other particular thing."[35] However by the end of his life his artistic milieu frequently celebrated an essentialized Jewish identity in Stieglitz, regarding him as a like an ancient Jewish prophet or mystic. In *Our America* (1920), Waldo Frank wrote, "Stieglitz is a Jew. He takes up the ancient destiny where the degenerate Jew whom we have observed had let it fall. He is a prophet. And his ways are near to the old ways of his people."[36] This affectionate stereotype steeped in antisemitism, indicates that Stieglitz may have been acutely aware of the antisemitic attitudes he and many immigrants faced in common, despite vast differences in their lived experiences. No matter how much Stieglitz himself may have felt that he was fully assimilated into American culture and belonged, even those in his most intimate circle viewed him as an outsider. He therefore had every reason to try to distance himself from the ostracized immigrants that appeared on American shores at the turn of the century when he viewed them from the comfort of the first class deck, and just as much to gain from their eventual acceptance into the American body politic as whites in the 1920s—for their racial designation had much to do with his own.

By analyzing the shifting meanings of *The Steerage*, I trace links between settler colonialism and the significant shifts in white racial classification that occurred during Stieglitz's lifetime. Michael Omi and Howard Winant contend that the process of racialization is one that makes racial difference visible while constructing whiteness as the

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[35] Stieglitz to Waldo Frank, April 3, 1925, YCAL, box 20; An article on Stieglitz in the *The American Hebrew* qualified the categorization of Stieglitz as a Jew, noting, "He is not consciously Jewish," and quoting Stieglitz saying that he instead considered himself to be "nothing." Clarence I. Freed, "Alfred Stieglitz—Genius of the Camera," *The American Hebrew*, January, 18, 1924, 305, YCAL, clipping files.

[36] Waldo Frank, *Our America* (New York, Boni and Liveright, 1920), 186; See also Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York: Essays on Fourteen American Moderns* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1924), 240, 262-264; Waldo Frank, "The New World in Stieglitz,"*America & Alfred Stieglitz: A Collective Portrait,* Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford, Dorothy Norman, Paul Rosenfeld, Harold Rugg, eds. (New York: Aperture, 1979 [1939]), 106.

universal and invisible norm for the purpose of maintaining white supremacy.[37] Over the last several decades many race scholars excavated the vicissitudes of whiteness as a distinct and unstable American racial category that emerged during the colonial era. Settlers made sense of their own allegiances across heterogeneous class and national origins by conceptualizing themselves as white in distinction from the Others with whom they shared the territorial and ideological space of the nation. Initially a monolithic group of mostly British origin defined against Indians and enslaved Africans, whiteness was complicated and variously redefined many times over during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as other groups of immigrants and colonized peoples modified the cultural makeup of the nation.[38] Scholars of settler colonialism have made important links between racialization and settler ideology. For instance, Wolfe examines the evolution of American anti-miscegenation laws, demonstrating that the shifting legal definitions of white, black, Indigenous, and mixed-race subjectivities in the United States were tied to settler ideology. Because colonists desired Indigenous land and black labor, it was advantageous to settlers to classify blackness based upon "one drop" of black "blood" in order to increase cheap labor, while indigeneity required a greater quantum of "blood" to prove one's entitlement to rights of self-possession and property.[39] Where Ignatiev

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[37] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, third edition (New York: Routledge, 2014), 105-130.

[38] See for example Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); David R. Roediger, T*he Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991); Mai Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

[39] Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016), 2, 14-16, 61-85, 196-201; Patrick Wolfe, "Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (June 2001): 867–868, 883-894.

demonstrated that Irish Americans achieved the racial status of whiteness through labor disputes with black Americans during the mid-nineteenth century, Veracini adds that the subsequent attacks on Asian American laborers served to indigenize the Irish by establishing their "natural" belonging within the settlement against those deemed to be "aliens," even though both groups were recent immigrants.[40] American racial discourse therefore must be properly situated within the unique ideological frameworks that distinguish settler colonialism from colonialism. However there has been insufficient scholarship examining ongoing connections between the flexibility of whiteness and settler colonialism. I argue that American whiteness is a racially category inexorably bound to the logics of the settlement and its vicissitudes serve to justify the settler's ongoing occupation of purloined territory.

By examining white visual culture after the closing of the frontier, I draw important conclusions regarding the ongoing pertinence of settler colonial studies to studies of white racialization that appear divorced from more obvious acts of settlement. Frederick Jackson Turner's essay on "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893) famously declared that the American frontier was closed, and with the end of westward expansion he theorized that the nation now lacked a means by which social antagonisms between different groups might be diffused and by which European immigrants might be transformed into Americans through their spiritual connection with the rugged frontier.[41] Turner's thesis has widely been examined as a turning point in American history, with little agreement regarding its veracity. However, as Anthony W. Wood poignantly notes, scholars of settler colonialism in the United States have so

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[40] Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White;* Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 26.

[41] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 22-23.

profoundly focused their efforts on the frontier period that Wolfe's important thesis that settler colonialism is a structure, not an event, remains understudied.[42] Even Turner himself proposed a version of Wolfe's thesis, stating that once the "frontier period [had] passed away, the conception of society, the ideals and aspirations which it produced, persist[ed]." The frontier "experience [had] been wrought into the very warp and woof of American thought" such that Turner claimed it could now be found in the nation's expanding cities, pioneering businessmen, and innovative development of technologies.[43] It follows that the flexible capacity of the frontier to permeate American life where there was no frontier was matched to the flexibility of settler subjectivity to permeate whiteness after whites ceased to "settle" the frontier.

I extend Wolfe's thesis to the study of twentieth-century visual culture to ask: How did settler ideology delimit the kinds of artistic freedoms that were imaginable for modernist photography in the twentieth century? I argue that settler ideology was indeed knit into the "very warp and woof" of photography. Following Martin Berger's influential study of whiteness in visual culture that contends that whiteness structures visual frameworks and perception even where nonwhite bodies do not appear, I examine the presence of settler subjectivity in the making and interpretation of photographs not apparently connected to acts of settlement.[44] I introduce the framework of settler modernism as an analytic scaffolding that makes legible American modernism's aesthetic means for visually marking settlers' absolute distance from frontier violence with evermore profound and perfect amnesia.

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[42] Anthony W. Wood, "Colonial Erosion: Unearthing African American History in the Settler Colonial West," *Settler Colonial Studies* 9, no. 3 (July 3, 2019): 400.

[43] Turner, *The Frontier in American History,* 264-265.

[44] Berger, *Sight Unseen*, 7-8.

As the closing of the frontier compelled whites to describe their Americanness in terms of rising skyscrapers, corporate conquests, and the "pure" dirt of "the street and the mill and the saloon," settler amnesia about the violence of the nation's origins entered a new stage. Twentieth-century modernity neared what Adam J. Barker, Toby Rollo and Emma Battell Lowman call the conclusion of the "trajectory of settler colonialism," which begins with *terra nullis* and leads "toward a sense of finality or transcendence of the colonial form when the land has been developed beyond recognition as something that Indigenous peoples could claim."[45] According to Turner's thesis, the frontier inevitably developed in "waves" or "stages of the advance of the frontier" in which it transformed from a free and primitive territory to civilized democracy. The unparalleled American freedom of the open frontier had a "deep and enduring" influence on the democratic means by which technologies, cities, and business enterprises developed unhampered.[46] Accordingly in settler visual culture images of skyscrapers and the urban working class accordingly performed the ideological work once executed by images of "vanishing" Indians and empty landscapes. Veracini describes how such settler narratives link settlement to the temporality of the future, identifying colonizers as with the freedoms of liberal modernity—and Indians with an outdated tribal past. Modern urban environments displace Indians and the violences against them into a distant past, such that when modern indigenous people enunciate their grievances, their concerns are seen as belonging to a prior time and place regarded as discontinuous with present day realities.[47] Accordingly, though the violence of dispossession and assimilation of

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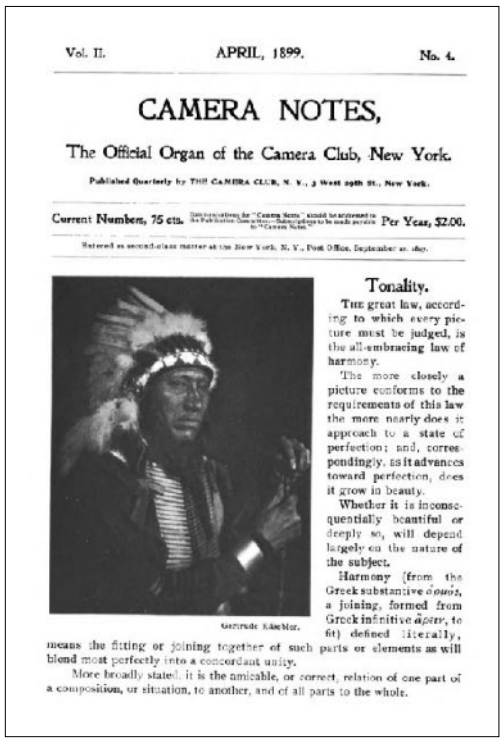
[45] Adam J. Barker, Toby Rollo and Emma Battell Lowman, "Settler Colonialism and the Consolidation of Canada in the Twentieth Century," *Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, 159.

[46] Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 264.

[47] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 33-52.



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Tonality.

THE great law, according to which every picture must be judged, is the all-embracing law of harmony.

The more closely a picture conforms to the requirements of this law the more nearly does it approach to a state of perfection; and, correspondingly, as it advances toward perfection, does it grow in beauty.

Whether it is inconsequentially beautiful or deeply so, will depend largely on the nature of the subject.

Harmony (from the Greek substantive *ὁμονία*, a joining, formed from Greek infinitive *ἁρσειν*, to fit) defined literally, means the fitting or joining together of such parts or elements as will blend most perfectly into a concordant unity.

More broadly stated, it is the amicable, or correct, relation of one part of a composition, or situation, to another, and of all parts to the whole.

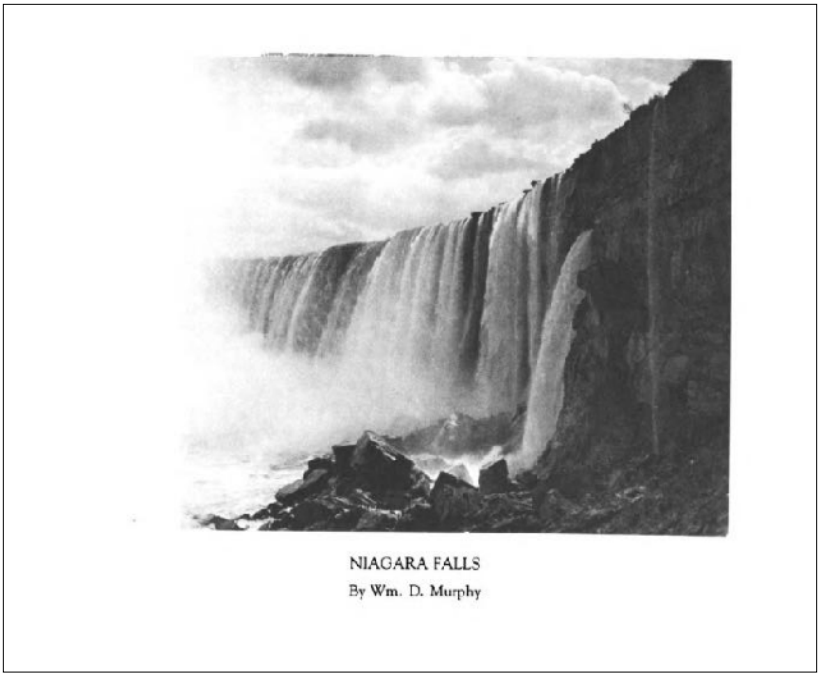
Gertrude Käsebier.

STUDY OF AN INDIAN GIRL

Reproduction of a Platinotype

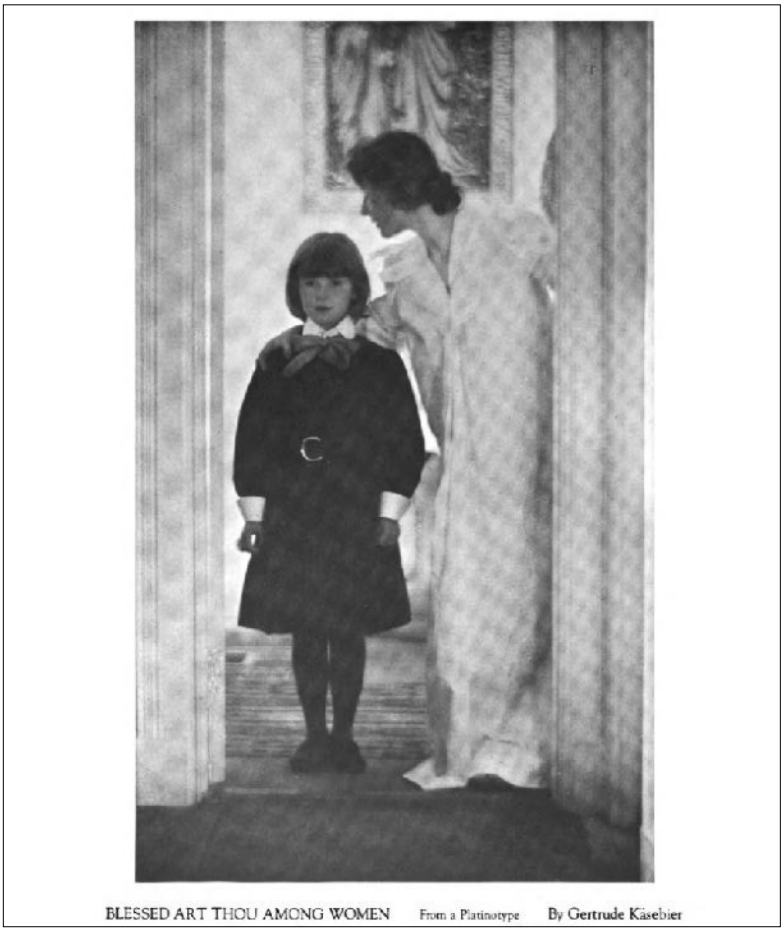
By Joseph T. Keiley

Figures 11-12. Page layout from *Camera Notes* 2, no. 4, featuring untitled photograph by Gertrude Kasebier, 1899 (left) and *Study of an Indian Girl*, by Joseph T. Keiley, 1899 (right).



NIAGARA FALLS
By Wm. D. Murphy

Figure 13. Page layout from *Camera Notes* 2, no. 4, featuring *Niagara Falls*, by Wm. D. Murphy, 1899.



BLESSED ART THOU AMONG WOMEN From a Platinotype By Gertrude Käsebier

Figure 14. Page layout from *Camera Notes* 4, no. 1, featuring *Blessed Art Thou Among Women*, by Gertrude Käsebier, 1900.

Indigenous nations and their lands was ongoing in the early twentieth century, as was their sustained struggle for cultural survival and restoration; the turn toward picturing urban modernity displaced Indian realities out of sight and out of mind.

Stieglitz's photographic publications and galleries, while ostensibly focused on proving the artistic merits of photography, in fact archived the turn in American visual culture from representing nostalgic views of "noble savages" toward urban liberties. His first magazine *Camera Notes*, which he edited from 1897 until 1902, aesthetically linked art photography to European pictorial traditions, yet also contained a representative catalog of settler scenes and archetypes: pastoral and sublime landscapes, romantic depictions of whites performing agricultural labor, virtuous maternal scenes, traditional portraits of respectable men, melancholy studies of Indians, and whites "playing Indian" (figures 10-14).[48] In the pages of Stieglitz's second magazine *Camera Work*, "the mouthpiece of the Photo-Secession," published from 1903 until 1917, unfolded the evolution of "straight photography" from its fuzzy atmospheric beginnings to sharp geometric formalism.[49] As photography moved away from the aesthetics of academic painting toward emergent forms of modernism, so too did its subject matter testify to shifting notions of the American settlement. Stieglitz's cityscapes became sharper and less shrouded in fog as Americans began to search for signs of frontier freedoms in the

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[48] Deloria describes "playing Indian" as the phenomenon of whites dressing up as Indians and performing imaginary aspects of Indian culture, pervasive throughout American history. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); For examples of settler archetypical photographs see F. H. Day, "Art and the Camera," *Camera Notes* 2, no. 1 (July 1898): 5; Gertrude Käsebier, untitled, *Camera Notes* 2, no. 4 (April 1899): 135; Gertrude Käsebier, *Indian Chief*, *Camera Notes* 6, no. 1 (July 1902): 53; Joseph T. Keiley, untitled, *Camera Notes* 3, no. 3 (January 1900) 104; Joseph T. Keiley, *Study of an Indian Girl*, *Camera Notes* 2, no. 4: 143; Joseph T. Keiley, *An Indian Girl*, *Camera Notes* 4, no. 1 (July 1900): 7; Wm. D. Murphy, *Niagara Falls*, *Camera Notes* 2, no. 4: 163; Gertrude Käsebier, *Blessed Art Thou Among Women, Camera Work* 4, no. 1: 19.

[49] Alfred Stieglitz, Joseph T. Keiley, Dallett Fuguet, John Francisc Strauss, "An Apology," *Camera Work,* no. 1 (January 1903):15-16.


Figure 15. (left) *Photograph—New York*, by Paul Strand, as it appeared in *Camera Work,* no. 49/50, 1917.

Figure 16. (right) *Photograph—New York*, by Paul Strand, as it appeared in *Camera Work,* no. 49/50, 1917.

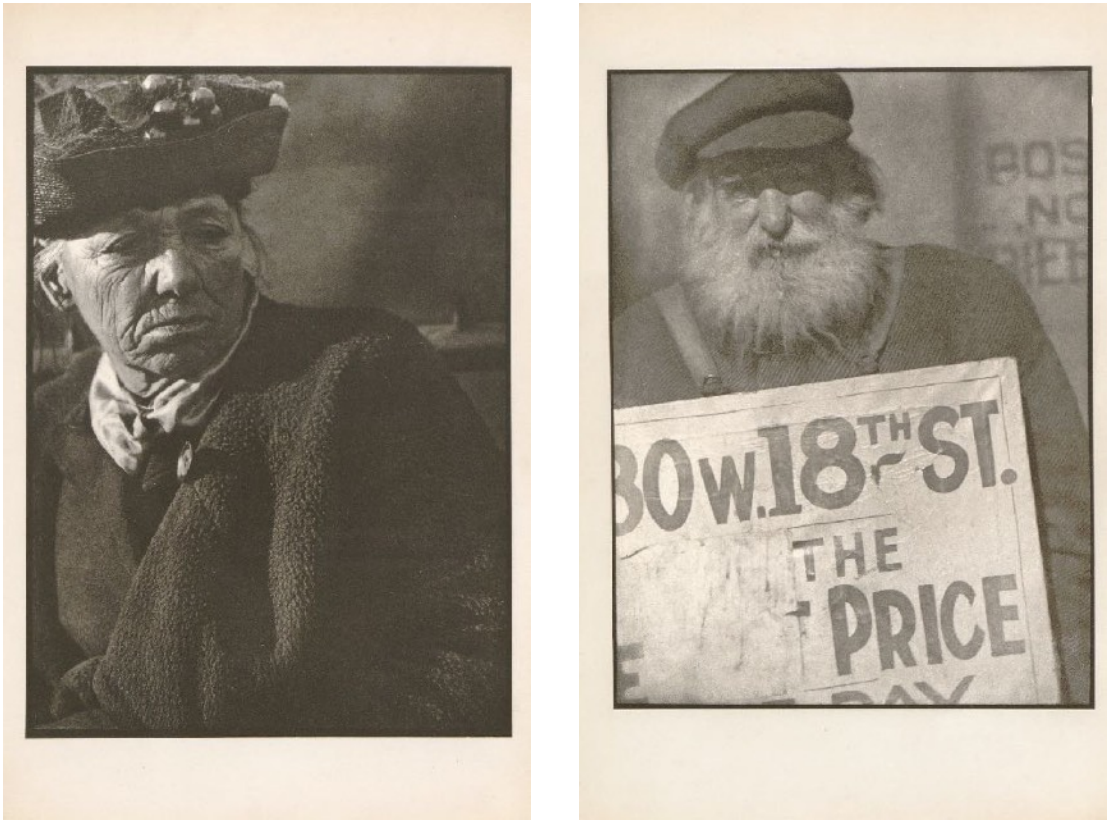


Figure 17. (left) *Photograph—New York*, by Paul Strand, as it appeared in *Camera Work,* no. 49/50, 1917.

Figure 18. (right) *Photograph—New York*, by Paul Strand, as it appeared in *Camera Work,* no. 49/50, 1917.

modern city's upward expansion and free market economy. As white Americans became urban salaried workers, the Stieglitz's postwar milieu portrayed rural and urban poor as a nostalgic "vanishing breed" of primitives.[50] The final issues of *Camera Work* featured Paul Strand's 1917 portrayals of anonymous poor, disabled, and immigrant New Yorkers in sharp detail (figures 15-18).[51] The striking detail of Strand's portraits revealed severe faces weathered and discolored by hard lives, their clothing untucked, stained and tattered. The urban poor confirmed for Stieglitz's later milieu that Manhattan's soil was imbued with a spiritual quality of Americanness. They saw the working class as maintaining the unique capacity to "touch" Manhattan's soil and transcend the commercialism and materialism that dominated the contemporary city. This metaphorical soil beneath Manhattan's rapid urbanization represented the remnants of the frontier that Turner found in the "warp and woof" of the fabric of modern America. Stieglitz's milieu idealized the poor classes of New York as humble Americans who maintained an authentic connection to America's soil and were not led astray by the materialism of modern life.[52]

Despite the many shifts in aesthetic styles and permissible distortions that had characterized "straight" photography during the course of Stieglitz's career, Strand's photographs in the final issue of *Camera Work* were proposed as the final statement on the matter—an assertion that has largely persisted. I argue that the "brutal honesty" attributed to this final designation of "straight" was connected to the settler search for the

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[50] See for example Sherwood Anderson, *Poor White* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1920); Sherwood Anderson, *Winesberg, Ohio* (New York: The Modern Library, 1919); Van Wyck Brooks, "Toward a National Culture," *The Seven Arts* 1, no. 5 (March 1917), 535-547.

[51] *Camera Work,* no 49/50 (June 1917), 9-19.

[52] Lewis Mumford, "The Metropolitan Milieu," in *America & Alfred Stieglitz,* 31-35.

rugged authenticity and honest life associated with the frontier. Stieglitz described Strand's photographs as "pure," "brutally direct" and "devoid of all flam-flam." Stieglitz proposed that such photographs resulted not just from the subject matter but from Strand's own "close touch with all that is related to life in its fullest aspect." Strand's direct contact with his subjects resulted from the fact that he was also a humble "worker" rather than an imitative "picture-maker." Strand's photographs were thus a reflection of his interiority: "something from within" that expressed "the essence of Strand" himself. Stieglitz repeatedly stressed that Strand's photographs did "not rely upon tricks of process" and were "devoid of any attempt to mystify an ignorant public."[53] Modernist photography was not merely imbued with subject matter that confirmed settler narratives, it was a mode of using the photographic technology with the spirit of the frontier. By ceasing to "imitate" European modes of "picture-making" American photographers freed photography from the affectation of tradition and instead made contact with the "soil" of America imbued the purity, authenticity, and directness that was unique to the American experience. Just as Turner had described the frontier spirit as touching every fiber of American life, the very light-sensitive particles of American film and photographic paper were imagined to be touched by the free and democratic spirit of the American frontier.

Several scholars have documented the uncertain and unstable beginnings of modernist photography under Stieglitz's leadership. Lauren Kroiz and Kathleen Pyne each trace how the instabilities registered in photographic archive were linked to changing notions of the Other. Pyne's *Modernism and the Feminine Voice* follows the 1890s to 1930 timeline through the lens of women artists that Stieglitz selectively

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[53] Alfred Stieglitz, "Our Illustrations," *Camera Work*, no. 49/50: 36.

promoted as his notions of modernism shifted. Pyne brings to light the unstable gender ideals of the period. She shows that once women were finally perceived as potential modern subjects, they were expected to make their sexual difference visually evident. As such their artwork was both the product of agency and liberation, but also confined by new demands upon the "feminine voice." In his paternal role as curator of photographers and artists, Stieglitz selectively promoted and discarded their work as it met his own needs for feminine accompaniment to the profoundly shifting definitions of modernism he expounded.[54] Meanwhile, Kroiz's *Creative Composites* traces multiracial discourse in Stieglitz's circles during the same 1890s-1930 period. Kroiz finds that the many shifts in discourse about race, immigration, miscegenation, pluralism, and assimilation that spanned the turn of the century until the Second World War, can be found in the aesthetics of Stieglitz's milieu, especially through examination of the work and writings of and about nonwhites in his circles.[55] Projects like Pyne's and Kroiz's are important for decentering the dominant narrative of modernist photography by focusing on women and nonwhite artists whose work was foundational to modernism yet not credited as such. They do the valuable work of excavating from the archive the stories and voices that have been eclipsed by histories written about Stieglitz and the white male artists of his circles.

Alan Trachtenberg argues that Stieglitz "oversimplified the question of art and photography," narrowing the definition of artistic photographic practice according to his criteria and affecting the historical archive such that subsequent photo historians

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[54] Kathleen A. Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice: O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

[55] Kroiz, *Creative Composites.*

accepted Stieglitz's construction of photographic history that placed him as the first American modernist photographer, ignoring American photographers that had preceded him.[56] For much of the twentieth century Stieglitz literature was celebratory or biographical, mostly accepting Stieglitz as the sole father figure of American modernist photography and sometimes even the father of American modern art itself due to the exhibitions at his New York galleries. Histories of photography such as Beaumont Newhall's *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present*, which had reached its fifth edition by 1982 and continues to be in print, largely accepted not only Stieglitz as the father figure of modernist photography, but also largely accepted Stieglitz's own version of the history of photography that preceded him, thus ignoring or otherwise classifying photographers that did not fit Stieglitz's narrow definition of art.[57] Trachtenberg laments that Stieglitz's narrow definition of art depoliticized the photograph, making it into an image that would not signify the actual or real historical conditions of the subjects of the photograph.[58] Elspeth Brown points out that fine art modernism, which reached its heights under the leadership of Museum of Modern Art curator John Szarkowski, continued this problematic legacy by its unwavering devotion to the photograph as an analogon of reality without recognition of how photographs accrue meanings imposed by history.[59] This project significantly demystifies the usable

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56 Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 164-230.

57 Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present*, 5th ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1982); Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 173-174.

58 Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 164-230.

59 Elspeth Brown, *The Corporate Eye: Photography and the Rationalization of American Commercial Culture, 1884–1929* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 15.

past at the foundation of American photographic modernism, opening the field to investigate how this history gained salience during the mid- and late twentieth century as monolithic whiteness was increasingly consolidated by "nation of immigrants" rhetoric during the same period that white dominance was increasingly challenged by movements for civil rights.

# Chapter One: The Hand Camera and New York's Picturesque Slums

Soon after Alfred Stieglitz's departure for Europe on the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* in May 1907, photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn penned him a letter, reporting, "You were altogether too busy snaping [sic] the new Kodak to wave your hand at us from the steamer as it pulled out."[1] Coburn's statement is remarkable considering Stieglitz once ridiculed those who snapped photographs "by-the-yard," declaring handheld cameras could only produce art if operated with patience and careful calculation.[2] It is also remarkable considering Stieglitz had made few photographs during the first decade of the twentieth century, lamenting that he was too busy with the "cause" of art photography to make much new work of his own.[3] Coburn's statement indicates that Stieglitz had purchased a new camera shortly before his departure and wasted no time producing new work. The "new Kodak" to which Coburn refers was likely a Graflex—a professional handheld camera manufactured by Kodak after 1905—with which Stieglitz would make *The Steerage* (figure 1, 1907).[4]

Though he would later claim that the making of *The Steerage* was motivated by his identification with "common people," it is more likely that he was concerned with

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[1] Alvin Langdon Coburn to Alfred Stieglitz, May 1907, Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Yale Collection of American Literature. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (hereafter YCAL), Series 1, Box 10, quoted in Elizabeth Anne McCauley, "The Making of a Modernist Myth," *The Steerage and Alfred Stieglitz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 25.

[2] Alfred Stieglitz, "The Hand-Camera—Its Present Importance," *The American Annual of Photography and the Photographic Times Almanac* 11 (1897): 20.

[3] Richard Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz: A Biography* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 198-206.

[4] McCauley, "Modernist Myth," 25-26.

securing his place at the top of the social ladder in the American photographic sphere.[5] His place among the pictorialists had become increasingly insecure since the turn of the century and his ouster from the Camera Club was imminent.[6] F. Holland Day had formed a new group of pictorialists in Boston, which Stieglitz regarded as a threat to his leadership. Stieglitz was distressed by the fact that many of the new photographers who had appeared on the American scene—Coburn, along with Gertrude Käsebier and Clarence White—had joined Day's group. Their photographs did not adhere to Peter Henry Emerson's principles of Naturalistic Photography that had become standard for distinguishing an art photograph from its commercial and snapshot counterparts. These younger artists exhibited influences of Japanese prints, Pre-Raphealite painting, Whistler, and art educator Arthur Wesley Dow. Yet they won the highest honors at national juried exhibitions. Stieglitz's own work began to seem outdated in comparison.[7]

Stieglitz was not engaged in any ordinary "snapping." While behind the camera Stieglitz was intensely self-conscious about the role his photographs might play in setting an example for other photographers. Stieglitz's photographs, frequently published alongside didactic texts about art photography, functioned as visual thesis statements about the terms by which photography should be understood as a work of art.

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5 Alfred Stieglitz, "How *The Steerage* Happened," *Twice a Year* nos. 8-9 (1942): 127; *The Steerage* is typically dated June 1907, following Stieglitz's account of making the image. However the ship departed on May 14. Elizabeth Ann McCauley, "The Making of a Modernist Myth," *The Steerage,* 21; For more discussion of Stieglitz's 1920s claims, see chapter three.

6 The Camera Club of New York demanded Stieglitz's resignation on December 20, 1907. Stieglitz had previously resigned as Vice President of the Camera Club in the summer of 1900 and from his editorship of *Camera Notes* in 1902. Minutes from the Advisory Committee of Camera Club of New York, December 20, 1907, reprinted in "Alfred Stieglitz vs. the Camera Club of New York," *Image* 14, no. 5 (December 1971): 21-23. YCAL, Series III, Box 111, folder 2234.

7 Sarah Greenough, "Alfred Stieglitz: Rebellious Midwife to a Thousand Ideas," in *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and his New York Galleries,* Sarah Greenough, ed. (Boston: Bullfinch Press, 2000), 23-28; Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 198-206.

Periodically throughout his career he also published "mega" theses, devoting several pages or (once he began editing his own journals) an entire journal issue to his own work as a statement about a groundbreaking new direction for photography. When he departed on the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* it had been a decade since he published such a major group of photographs. In "The Hand Camera—Its Present Importance" (1897) he had announced "his" discovery that a snapshot camera could produce photographic artworks in the hands of a skilled and patient operator.[8] That same year he began to publish and edit *Camera Notes*, with his own photographs dominating the majority of its pages during the first few years of publication. As his leadership was more frequently criticized by members of New York's community of amateur photographers after 1900, the appearance of his work dwindled until he returned from Europe in 1907, publishing a group of "snapshots" in his new journal *Camera Work.*[9] These "snapshots" and accompanying didactic texts comprised another thesis statement on art photography. *The Steerage* notably did not appear in this group of images; his discarded test print would not be reconsidered for several years.[10] This chapter interprets *The Steerage* in light of these two significant thesis groups of photographs, examining the photographic process that Stieglitz regarded as signaling a groundbreaking way forward for art photography in each set of images. Whereas during the 1890s he strained to distinguish his own handheld work from ordinary snapshots by emphasizing his craftsmanship, in 1907 he

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[8] Stieglitz, "The Hand-Camera—Its Present Importance," 20-27.

[9] Plates I-III, *Camera Work* 20, 47-53. During this period art photographers identified themselves as "amateurs" to distinguish themselves from commercial photographers.

[10] Stieglitz's test print was likely rediscovered by Marius de Zayas in 1910. Edward Steichen, *Steichen: A Life in Photography* (Mahwah, NJ: Doubleday & Company, 1963), chapt. 4.

would suggest that his photographs were in fact "snapshots," marking a significant shift in rhetoric about the art photograph.

I argue that the photograph that would later become *The Steerage* was intended to fit within his developing oeuvre of picturesque urban "snapshots" that assuaged settler anxieties about modernity. Though they appeared less strictly composed than his prior pictorialist work, these "snapshots" carefully omitted evidence of modern technology, industrial labor, and race mixing. They pictured New York as if it were a timeworn European city with an intact racial order. Stieglitz developed this series following the advice of art critic Sadakichi Hartmann, who suggested that New York photographers develop a distinctly American medium-specific form of photography that utilized American picturesque aesthetics. Picturesque aesthetics had for several decades been a popular mode for picturing the American settlement as if it were a civilization as ancient as Europe—visually erasing the presence of indigenous histories and constructing order out of the disjunct modern realities emerging across the nation. Stieglitz's picturesque "snapshots" thus fabricated a usable past image of New York as a timeworn ancient city whose history appeared to extend beyond three centuries of settlement. While the image that became *The Steerage* was motivated by his intention to create an image of picturesque "immigrants from the Old World," I argue that Stieglitz initially discarded the print because the state-of-the-art steel forms of the ship set against different "races" mixing together on the steerage decks conflicted with his intention to picture European immigrants as discreet ancient races whose traditional lifestyles were untouched by modernity.[11]

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11 William Cullen Bryant, *Picturesque America; or, The Land We Live In: A Delineation by Pen and Pencil of the Mountains, Rivers, Lakes, Forests, Waters, Water-falls, Shores, Cañons, Valleys, Cities, and Other Picturesque Features of Our Country,* vol. 2 (New York: D. Appleton and Company), 549.

Though race mixing and modern lifestyles were an increasing reality in the United States at the turn of the century, Stieglitz and his allies championed narratives about essentialized racial types seemingly living as they had for hundreds of years, simply relocated onto American shores. They urged photographers to keep their lenses out of the dirty business of facts—the poverty and crime documented by police and social reformers—in favor of truths. By the late nineteenth century the public and the sciences had learned to see the photograph as an accurate document of an objective, untampered reality that once lay before the camera's lens.[12] In contrast, Stieglitz and his milieu were heavily involved in training connoisseurs of art photography to seek a different kind of truth at the turn of the century. Art photography was distinguished from legal and reform photographs in its communication of eternal truths. These sacrosanct truths supported a white settler world view that maintained the righteousness of racial hierarchies as a sign that modern America belonged within the timeless order of the history of Western civilization. It filtered the harsh inequities of America's multiethnic industrialized society through the lens of comfortable narratives about the humble traditional lifestyles of working-class people.

## The Hand Camera's Racial Types

The handheld camera of the late nineteenth century looked like little more than a hollow black box with a small dark hole on one end—no larger than a standard brick and

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12 See John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive." *October* 39, no. 39 (1986): 3-64.

about the weight of a quart of water. With no viewfinder and only a shutter-release lever and winding lever, it offered little opportunity for control over composition and exposure.[13] It was operated almost entirely by the hand, rather than the eye. The hand's supremacy in maneuvering the camera unfastened it from the stability of tripod and ground, and attached it instead to the body of the mobile modern subject. As Jonathan Crary argues, the handheld camera severed visual representation from the fixed viewing position associated with scientific observation and Cartesian perspective. The modern field of vision became corporeal, fallible, and disjointed. Crary credits abstraction in painting at the turn of the century to photography's introduction of notions of corporeal vision and artists' subsequent questioning of the existence of an empirical "real world."[14]

The visual perspective of *The Steerage* appears to align with Crary's timeline, marking photography's turn toward abstraction as linked to painting's departure from conventions of Cartesian perspectivalism. Stieglitz's viewing position appears unfastened from the ground. People and shapes spread across the image in every direction without clear visual hierarchy. Stieglitz's frequently cited and reprinted essay, "The Hand-Camera: It's Present Importance," written a decade earlier, also fits this narrative, supporting the idea that Stieglitz had been an early advocate of a corporeal photographic vision. Stieglitz's 1920s account of making of *The Steerage* also makes it appear as if art photography demonstrated a parallel break at the turn of the century: "I saw a picture of shapes and underlying that the feeling I had about life."[15] Accordant with notions of

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[13] Some cameras offered a choice between three aperture sizes. The aperture is the opening in lens whose width can be adjusted to let more or less light into the camera. Professional cameras offered about eight aperture settings, as well as controls for the length of time the aperture was open.

[14] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1990), 137-150.

[15] Stieglitz, "How *The Steerage* Happened," 127.

abstraction in painting, Stieglitz's belated description of *The Steerage* displaces the photograph's historical subject matter and associates it instead with mere "shapes" that stand in for the artist's feelings.

However the link between these milestones is complicated by the fact that Stieglitz initially discarded *The Steerage*. Though the image that materialized fell short of his hopes, the image Stieglitz imagined when he released the shutter plausibly matched his emergent conception of art photography. This liminal image that I call the proto-*Steerage* opens up a range of questions about how and why the handheld camera became an acceptable artist's tool and where Stieglitz drew the line between an artwork made with a handheld camera and a less desirable photograph—something more like an ordinary snapshot riddled with amateurish mistakes.

Stieglitz's earliest impressions of snapshot photography were unfavorable. When he returned home to New York in 1890 after studying photography abroad in Berlin, snapshot photography was becoming popular in the United States. George Eastman had patented the Kodak No. 1 in 1888—the first camera that could be operated by someone with no technical training in photography. Stieglitz immediately scorned snapshot photography claiming that Kodak's "You press the button and we do the rest" slogan sickened him.[16] He remained firm in his commitment to photographing according to the methods in which he had been trained: carefully composing photographs made with a

16 Dorothy Norman, "From the Writings and Conversations of Alfred Stieglitz," *Twice a Year* 1 (Fall-Winter 1938): 95.

Figure 19. *Winter—Fifth Avenue,* by Alfred Stieglitz, 1893.

tripod-bound large format 8x10 camera, calculating exposure precisely with a trained eye, and laboriously perfecting the tonal values of his prints.[17]

Even though he would later recall having misgivings about Kodak, by 1891 Stieglitz began experimenting with a handheld box camera.[18] The photographer amassed a small collection of handheld shots, which he exhibited at the lantern slide presentations that were a central activity of the camera clubs to which he belonged.[19] He would later make the claim that *Winter—Fifth Avenue* (figure 19, 1893) was his first photograph made with a handheld camera, fabricating the myth that he had immediately established a distinction between his own handheld photographs and those made by untrained snapshooters with similar cameras.[20] However, his earliest handheld photographs reveal that Stieglitz made and displayed many photographs that did not differ significantly from ordinary snapshots of the era. Some lacked clear subjects due to awkward and random cropping, while others lacked aesthetic appeal by the standards of the era because of the straightforward and centered manner of framing banal subjects. Like snapshots, the subject matter varied considerably, ranging from everyday domestic scenes and outings with friends; to the plain documentation of facts; to poorly executed aesthetic contemplations.

His early handheld photographs demonstrate the technical and thematic problems that made these photographs too much like ordinary snapshots. In *Listening to*

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[17] Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* (New York: Random House, 1973), 34.

[18] Stieglitz reported that he did not believe the hand camera was capable of making art because of its commercialism, links with bicycle clubs, and the lack of exposure controls which caused photographs to frequently be overexposed. Stieglitz, "The Hand-Camera—Its Present Importance," 19-21.

[19] Sarah Greenough, *Alfred Stieglitz: The Key Set* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2002), xvii-xviii.

[20] Norman, "Writings and Conversations," 95.


Figure 20. Front and verso of *Listening to Crickets* showing areas of the image that were cropped out, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1891. Lantern slide.

Figure 21. *An Hour After the Snowstorm*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1896/1899.

Figure 22. *The Bourgogne at Havre*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1894.

*Crickets* (figure 20, 1891), Drew, the Stieglitz family dog, furrows his brow with curiosity about the sounds emanating from a metal bucket. Besides the trite subject matter, the un-cropped version of the photograph shows the problems with the lack of viewfinder (someone's skirt is in the frame) and lack of focusing controls (the dog's face is slightly out of focus). Amateurish mistakes are also evident in *An Hour after the Snowstorm* (figure 21, 1896/1899), whose aesthetic meditation on wintry weather is disturbed by exposure and composition problems. The bottom third of the frame is occupied by a foreground of fresh snow. In the distance several objects compete for the viewer's attention. A fire hydrant, tree, lampposts, and a hansom cab are scattered through the frame with no apparent visual hierarchy. The tree and hydrant at the center of the image compete with each other for prominence with no visual narrative to explain why either of them might be of interest. It is unclear from the composition what Stieglitz intended as the main subject of the photograph. The title suggests that the fresh snow itself was of interest to him, indicating that he did not anticipate how the darker figures in the frame would draw the viewer's attention away from the bright snow that interested him due to their stark shadowy contrast to his intended subject. In another early handheld shot, *The Bourgogne at Havre* (figure 22, 1894), Stieglitz stood in a place similar to that from which he would photograph *The Steerage* more than a decade later—on the first class deck of a France-bound transatlantic ocean liner. While on the SS La Bourgogne he turned his camera toward his first-class travel companions rather than below at the third-class passengers. As with many of his other handheld shots, the subject of the photograph is difficult to discern. The lack of a focusing mechanism and aperture controls has caused too much of the photograph to be in focus, causing Stieglitz's friends to be upstaged by the impressive coil of rope upon which they sit, the intricate network of ropes tied to the

masts, as well as the funnels and mast of the tugboat at the right of the frame. Riddled with compositional problems, Stieglitz discarded most of these photographs from his public oeuvre as his technique and style developed.

Despite Stieglitz's claim to have discovered the utility of the hand-camera in 1893 while making *Winter—Fifth Avenue*, the image appears to be an emulation of his Camera Club colleague William B. Post, who began using the hand-camera possibly as early as 1891. Post lent Stieglitz his own camera in 1893 to make *Winter—Fifth Avenue.* Around the same time Post made *Winter on Fifth Avenue* (figure 23, 1893), a nearly identical image of a hansom cab in the snow four blocks north of where Stieglitz photographed his famous image.[21] The uncropped compositions of the two photographs are strikingly similar (figure 24, 1893). Both men stood in the same position on a street corner looking down the street so that the corner of the opposite side of the street recedes into the background terminating just left of the center of the picture. Each photographer snapped his picture just as the hansom cab crossed the center middle-ground of the image. Stieglitz's image is both more dramatic and slightly underexposed due to the fact that he photographed in the dim light of a heavy snow storm. Though it is unknown which image was created first, it is likely that Stieglitz's photograph was directly influenced by Post's. Stieglitz later recalled that day, stating that he had borrowed Post's camera immediately after Post showed him a set of photographs that finally convinced Stieglitz that the hand-camera was capable of producing artwork.[22] Stieglitz also claimed that he waited three hours in the snow to make *Winter—Fifth Avenue* because he already had in

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[21] Christian A. Peterson, *The Quiet Landscapes of William B. Post* (Minneapolis: The Minneapolis Institute of the Arts, 2005), 22-23.

[22] Norman, "Writings and Conversations," 97.

Figure 23. *Winter on Fifth Avenue*, by William B. Post, 1893.

Figure 24. *Winter on Fifth Avenue*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1893.

mind the picture he desired to make.[23] It therefore seems plausible that his preconceived image was in fact the one he had seen earlier that day in Post's portfolio.

Whether original or not, *Winter—Fifth Avenue* along with *The Terminal* (figure 25, 1893), made days later, are today considered to be the Stieglitz's first major milestone contributions to art photography. They represent a turning point in American art photography on two fronts: They were made with a handheld camera and they take working-class people as their subjects. Stieglitz first published *Winter—Fifth Avenue* along with an array of photographs made during his 1894 honeymoon trip to Europe in "The Hand-Camera—Its Present Importance" (1897).[24] These photographs established Stieglitz as one of the leading art photographers in the world.[25] While the European photographs—also handheld images of working-class subjects—would eventually fall out of the limelight, *Winter—Fifth Avenue* and *The Terminal* continue to feature prominently in the historical narrative regarding Stieglitz's progressive achievements for the cause of art photography. Explanations of the photographs' significaance often rely upon Stieglitz's decades-later recollection of making the photographs, when, as Sarah Greenough notes, he refit the facts of his disjointed career to fashion a tidy teleological narrative.[26] He reported making *Winter—Fifth Avenue* while standing alone on the deserted Manhattan boulevard during a severe blizzard, driven to persevere in harsh conditions by the desire to photograph the "whole feeling" summed up by the singular driver, his horse, and the

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[23] Stieglitz, "The Hand-Camera," 25.

[24] Stieglitz, "The Hand-Camera," 18-27.

[25] Greenough, *The Key Set*, xix.

[26] Sarah Greenough, "Alfred Stieglitz, Facilitator, Financier, and Father, Presents Seven Americans," in *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and his New York Galleries*, Sarah Greenough, ed. (New York: Bulfinch Press, 2000), 277; For more discussion of these narratives, see chapter three.


Figure 25. *The Terminal*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1893.

snow. Two days later, after being ridiculed by Camera Club members for his first handheld negative, he reported happening upon the scene that would become *The Terminal*: "A driver in a rubber coat was watering his steaming horses. There seemed to be something related to my deepest feeling in what I saw, and I decided to photograph what was within me."[27] These accounts retrospectively served to link Stieglitz's psychological and physiological experience—cold and alienated, yet fervent—with that of his subjects—solitary humble workers wholeheartedly devoted to their labor. The handheld camera is thus figured as a sensitive psychological and physiological intermediary between the photographer's "deepest feelings" and the proletarian subjects with whom he identifies. While the third chapter will investigate in detail Stieglitz's use of such rhetoric at the end of his career, this chapter endeavors to uncouple his early photographs from such accounts in an effort to reconstruct his beliefs about art photography leading up to the moment that he aimed his handheld camera upon immigrants below him on the *Kaiser Wilhelm II.*

Stieglitz's statements on photographic practice during the making of *Winter-Fifth Avenue* and *The Terminal* reflect a more detached attitude toward working-class subjects.

> "Nothing charms me so much as walking among the lower classes, studying them carefully and making mental notes. They are very interesting from every point of view. I dislike the superficial and artificial, and I find less of it among the lower classes. That is the reason they are more sympathetic to me as subjects."[28]

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[27] Norman, "Writings and Conversations," 96-97.

[28] "Alfred Stieglitz and his Latest Work," *The Photographic Times* 28, no. 4 (April 1896): 161.

Rather than identify with working-class Americans, Stieglitz describes his observation of his subjects as an intellectual task. His reference to careful study and mental notes implies the scientific perspective of an ethnographer, while the value he places upon the authenticity of the "lower classes" suggests a desire for a refreshing release from the artifice and vanity characteristic of modern bourgeois lifestyles. Rendering working-class people as the subjects of his art was intended as an artistic metaphor, illustrating "how the simplest incident in the life of the humblest peasant may be made to embody the loftiest ideal of high art."[29] Stieglitz thus invoked together the facticity of the camera as a tool of objective observation and the idealizing vision of "eternal truths" cleansed of traces of modernity that might fit photography's facts to the standards of fine art.

Early in his career Stieglitz believed that art photography required training in scientific optics. This method of photography was outlined by Peter Henry Emerson in his widely influential *Naturalistic Photography* (1889), which Stieglitz had partially translated into German in 1889 and by 1899 regarded as a "classic" that established the methods and credentials of pictorial photography.[30] "Pure imitation of nature (even if it were possible) won't do," Emerson stated. "The artist must add his intellect, hence his

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[29] "Alfred Stieglitz and his Latest Work," 168.

[30] Stieglitz began translating the text into German at Emerson's request, but the project was terminated because they were unable to secure a German publisher. Peter Henry Emerson to Alfred Stieglitz, June 20, 1888 and September 18, 1889, YCAL Series I, Box 17, Folder 396; Alfred Stieglitz, "Pictorial Photography," *Scribner's Magazine* 26 (November 1899): 528.

work is an interpretation."[31] Emerson instructed his reader to intellectually interpret scenes by calibrating calculations of light and volume according to his observation of the qualities of vision in order to adjust his apparatus to the subtleties of human vision. In one passage, after instructing his reader to judge precisely the volume of the shapes and intensity of light in a scene, Emerson invites his reader to join him in a hypothetical exercise designed to instruct upon the proper adjustment of focus and depth of field by noticing where one's eyes are "naturally" drawn:

> "We row by on the lake, and are struck by the picture, but above all by the dazzling native beauty of the peasant girl: our eyes are fixed on the ruddy face and we can look at nothing else. If we are cool enough to analyze the picture, what is it that we see directly and sharply? The girl's beautiful head, and nothing else. We are conscious of the willow-tree, conscious of the light dress and the decaying timbers of the landing-stage, conscious of the cottage, away in the middle-distance, and conscious of the poplars shining blue and misty over the cottage roof… we feel all these, but we see clearly and definitely only the charming face."[32]

Emerson justifies his call for a shallow depth of field by appealing to the physiological vision of a heterosexual European male who becomes so transfixed by the "native beauty" of the girl's face that all other features of the scene fall away to faint

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[31] P. H. Emerson, *Naturalistic Photography for Students of the Art* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1889), 250; Stieglitz was influenced by Emerson particularly after winning his first award and public recognition in the 1887 "Photographic Holiday Work Competition" in *The Amateur Photographer*, judged by Emerson, for his photograph *The Good Joke*. Emerson wrote to Stieglitz, asking him to translate *Naturalistic Photography* into German, adding his praise for Stieglitz's photograph: "It was the only spontaneous work in the whole collection." P. H. Emerson to Alfred Stieglitz, June 20, 1888, YCAL, Series I, Box 17.

[32] Emerson, *Naturalistic Photography*, 150-151.

awareness. Emerson instructs artists to remain "cool enough" to measure the surrounding shapes, colors, and light, but allow his warm feelings for the girl guide the focus and aperture adjustments. The felt intensity of his infatuation determines that the girl's face should be rendered more sharply than the other elements. Thus for Emerson, the physiological binocular vision that differentiated an artist's work from machine-made photographs, was situated in the bourgeois European heterosexual male's feelings of desire and fantasy.[33]

He contrasted artwork with snapshot photographs made with handheld cameras that offered limited options for user control. In Emerson's counter-example, a photographer's over-reliance upon his machine destroyed the potency of the photograph of the peasant girl by rendering the entire image in sharp focus:

> "And where is the picture? Gone? The girl is there, but she is a mere patch in all the sharp detail. Our eyes keep roving from the bark to the willow leaves and on from the cottage thatch to the ripple on the water, *there is no rest,* all the picture has been jammed into one plane, and all the interest equally divided."

To Emerson, this mechanically-minded photographer is not an artist, but a snapshooting fool, duped by competing camera companies that advertised the various tricks their devices perform to make photographs "snap" and "sparkle" with "pluck."[34] Emerson guides his readers to avoid new-fangled products because the novelty of the

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[33] This passage may have had particular resonance for Stieglitz whose first successful "art" photographs were made in Bellagio, Italy where had became so fixated upon a sixteen-year-old working-class girl, Maria Billette, during a tour of Italy with friends, that he departed from the tour in order to stay in the town for three days to photograph Maria and her family. One of these photographs, *The Good Joke* (see above footnote), was taken during that extended stay. Nancy Newhall, unpublished manuscript, 42, quoted in Greenough, *The Key Set*, 19.

[34] Emerson, *Naturalistic Photography,* 165.

machines overshadow the intellect required to make true artwork. Their mechanized vision allows nature to imprint itself too democratically upon the photograph without a visual hierarchy to allow the viewer's eyes to focus on the humble subject of the photograph. Implicit in Emerson's lesson about focus is the suggestion that the snapshot's lack of visual hierarchy fails to stimulate in the viewer the heterosexual male fantasy that make photography defensible as a fine art. Emerson therefore counterposes his desire for the girl with a distaste for the vulgarity of modern machines and popular culture. He finds restful solace not only by isolating the girl he desires in his embodied field of vision, but by isolating her in a longed-for agrarian past cleansed of the chaos of modern life.

Emerson's own photographs of the era were testament to his desire, featuring farmers and fishermen of Eastern England in idyllic scenes performing manual labor in direct contact with the land and water (figures 26-27, 1886). His rural subjects appear to live "authentic" traditional lives, oblivious to the factories, cities, or fossil-fueled labor that characterized life for much of Britain's working classes. Emerson is explicit that he is not concerned with making portraits of individuals, but producing symbolic "types:" "The student should feel that there never was such a fisherman, or such a ploughman, or such a poacher, or such an old man, or such a beautiful girl, as he is picturing."[35] The matter of what to include and exclude from the photograph was as important as the selection of proper depth of field. Emerson instructs photographers to situate singular subjects within a broad view of the surrounding environment, paying close attention to every detail of the view, "or the result is a travesty." Even small unfit details such as "new-fashioned button-boots" or "aprons all clean and fashionably cut" might taint an entire

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[35] Emerson, *Naturalistic Photography,* 251.

Figure 26. *Coming Home from the Marshes*, by Peter Henry Emerson, 1886.

Figure 27. *Towing the Reed*, by Peter Henry Emerson, 1886.

photograph.[36] Not only must the subjects wear no signs of modernity upon their bodies, but their surroundings must be as pure of modernity as the types themselves. Emerson instructs his students to get as far from modernity as possible: "All nature near towns is tinged with artificiality." He suggests urban photographers take up residence for months among their subjects for the purpose of training their eyes to discern between the artificial and the authentic.[37] Emerson's persistent efforts to attune the photographer's eye to "the stamp of vulgarity" betray the strain necessary to find scenes untouched by modernity near the turn of the century.

Emerson's usage of the term "types" indicates the era's slippage between racial identity and national origin. Widely held beliefs about human evolution assumed a biological link between race and nation. This Neo-Lamarckian perspective held that within Europe different nations had different racial origins and had evolved corporeally in ways particularly suited to the habitat of their national territory. Physical characteristics, adapted to differing degrees of harsh and gentle native environments, were also believed to reflect the internal characteristics of each "racial type."[38] Press reviews of Emerson's photographs reflected this popular perspective, describing his photographs of English rural workers as "a natural history of one of the most interesting English race-types."[39] This review reflects that Emerson's photographs were perceived as offering valuable biological information—the "natural history" of a racial type similar to dioramas or natural history displays that showed people engaged in traditional labor in native

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[36] Emerson, *Naturalistic Photography,* 249

[37] Emerson, *Naturalistic Photography,* 245.

[38] Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea*, third edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 293-294.

[39] *Daily News (Leader)*, reprinted in Emerson, *Naturalistic Photography,* 5-6.

environments. Even though Emerson contended that art photographs were fundamentally distinct from scientific photographs, he embraced such statements (Emerson reprinted this review in his own book), demonstrating that the apprehension of qualities of a "pure" race were considered intrinsic to the experience of aesthetic pleasure. The matter of sorting artifice from authenticity in art photography thus occurred at several points in the making of a photograph: the selection of racially pure models, the careful exclusion of all signs of modernity from the image, and the skillful intelligent desire-driven operation of the camera.

Emerson's influence upon Stieglitz appears in Stieglitz's statement about walking among the "lower classes" observing them with detachment and enjoying their refreshing relief from "the superficial and artificial."[40] Again, the science of optics and aesthetic pleasure of racial purity is contrasted to the artifice of modernity and snapshot photography alike. Stieglitz relied upon this same contrast in his essay "The Hand-Camera—It's Present Importance" (1897), Stieglitz stated that while both artists and snapshooters might use a handheld camera, the latter were merely "Button Pressers" who used their fingers rather than their eyes to produce photographs "by-the-yard" and by "chance" as if it were a haphazard automated action of an industrial machine.[41] Stieglitz's article, typeset among more than a dozen of his own photographs, demonstrated the possibility for transcending snapshots with a handheld camera with examples from his own oeuvre (figures, 28-31).[42] The photographs largely depict rural working-class

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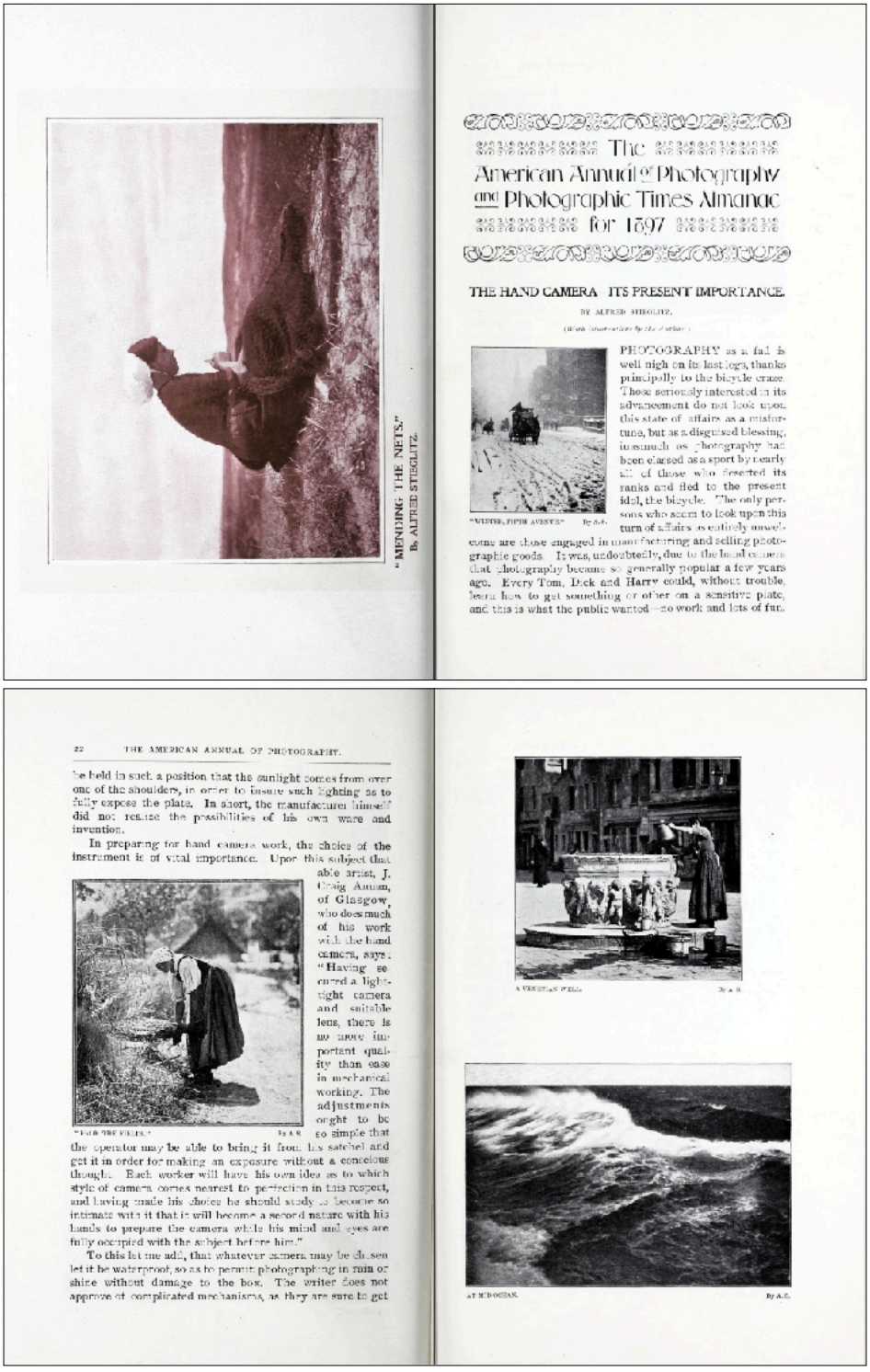
[40] "Alfred Stieglitz and his Latest Work," *The Photographic Times* 28, no. 4 (April 1896), 161-169.

[41] Stieglitz, "The Hand-Camera," 20; "Button pressers" is a reference to Kodak Eastman's first advertisements announcing the first snapshot camera, which famously stated, "You press the button. We do the rest."

[42] Stieglitz, "The Hand-Camera," 19-27.


"MENDING THE NETS."
By ALFRED STIEGLITZ.

The American Annual of Photography and Photographic Times Almanac for 1897

THE HAND CAMERA ITS PRESENT IMPORTANCE.

BY ALFRED STIEGLITZ.

PHOTOGRAPHY as a fad is well nigh on its last legs, thanks principally to the bicycle craze. Those seriously interested in its advancement do not look upon this state of affairs as a misfortune, but as a disguised blessing, inasmuch as photography had been classed as a sport by nearly all of those who deserted its ranks and fled to the present idol, the bicycle. The only persons who seem to look upon this turn of affairs as entirely unwelcome are those engaged in manufacturing and selling photographic goods. It was, undoubtedly, due to the hand camera that photography became so generally popular a few years ago. Every Tom, Dick and Harry could, without trouble, learn how to get something or other on a sensitive plate, and this is what the public wanted—no work and lots of fun.

"WAITER, FIFTH AVENUE" By A.S.

22 THE AMERICAN ANNUAL OF PHOTOGRAPHY.

be held in such a position that the sunlight comes from over one of the shoulders, in order to insure such lighting as to fully expose the plate. In short, the manufacturer himself did not realize the possibilities of his own ware and invention.

In preparing for hand camera work, the choice of the instrument is of vital importance. Upon this subject that able artist, J. Craig Annan, of Glasgow, who does much of his work with the hand camera, says: "Having secured a light-tight camera and suitable lens, there is no more important quality than ease in mechanical working. The adjustments ought to be so simple that the operator may be able to bring it from his satchel and get it in order for making an exposure without a conscious thought. Each worker will have his own idea as to which style of camera comes nearest to perfection in this respect, and having made his choice he should study to become so intimate with it that it will become a second nature with his hands to prepare the camera while his mind and eyes are fully occupied with the subject before him."

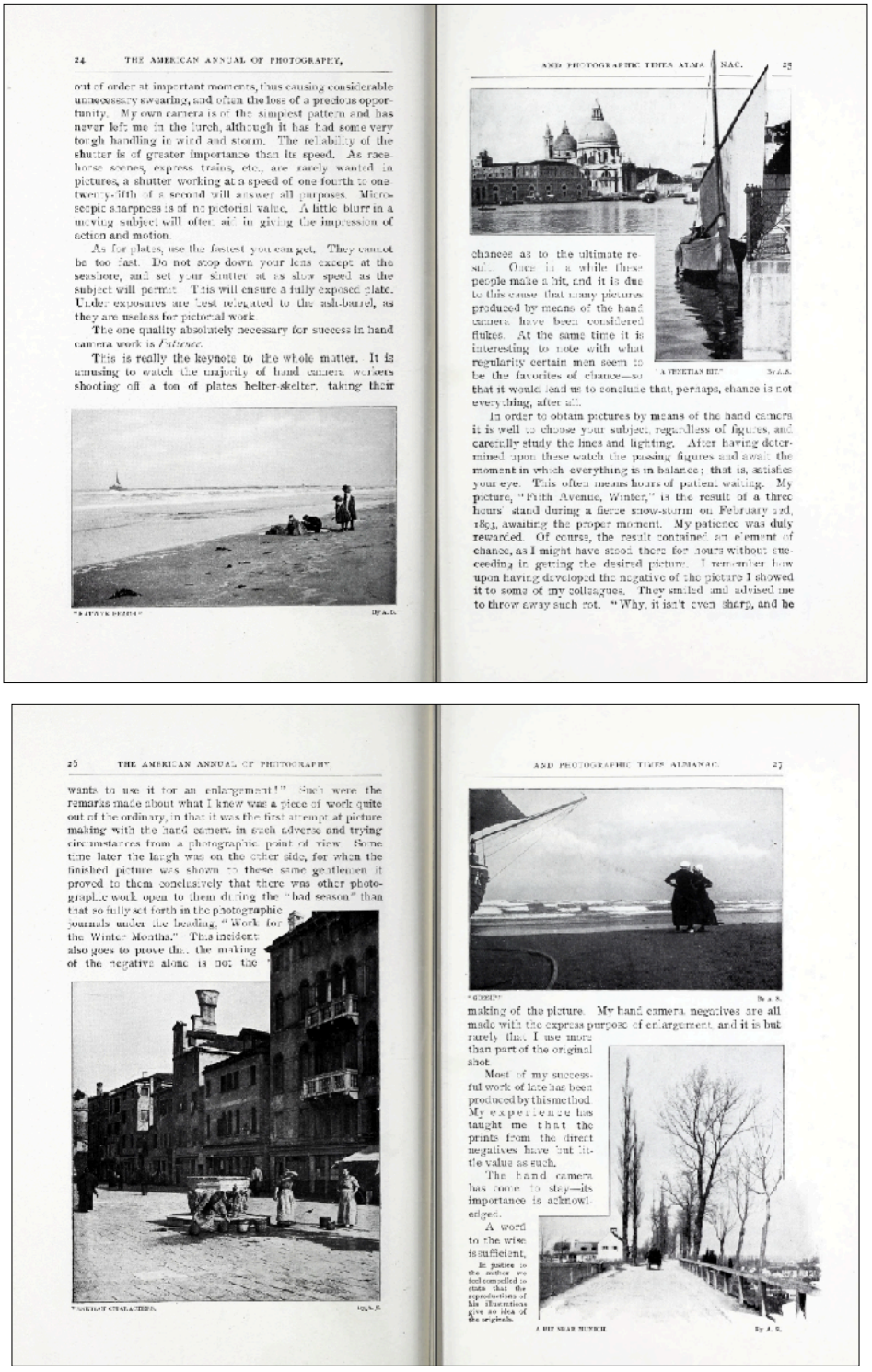
"FAIR THE FIELDS." By A.S.

To this let me add, that whatever camera may be chosen let it be waterproof, so as to permit photographing in rain or shine without damage to the box. The writer does not approve of complicated mechanisms, as they are sure to get

A CHRISTIAN PEELE. By A.S.

AT HUDDESAS. By A.S.

Figures 28-29. Page layouts from "The Hand Camera—Its Present Importance," by Alfred Stieglitz in *The American Annual of Photography and Photographic Almanac*, 1897.



Figures 30-31. Page layouts from "The Hand Camera—Its Present Importance," by Alfred Stieglitz in *The American Annual of Photography and Photographic Almanac*, 1897.

Europeans, made during Stieglitz's 1894 honeymoon trip to Europe. They demonstrate skillful adherence to Emerson's principles of Naturalistic Photography. Many feature solitary European rural and working-class subjects engaged in traditional forms of labor —a Dutch woman mending fishing nets, a German farmer harvesting wheat, a Venetian women hanging laundry and drawing water from a well. It thus appears that Stieglitz sought to demonstrate the value of the hand-camera for making artwork by proving its capacity to produce Emersonian types.

Several of the photographs that appear in "The Hand-Camera" were also described in detail in an 1895 article, "Two Artists' Haunts," co-authored with Stieglitz's travel companion Louis H. Schubart in *The Photographic Times.* The article purported to be a travel guide for photographers in search of premodern subjects living on their ancestral lands. It compares photographs made in Gutach, a farming village of the Black Forest in Germany, with those made in Katwijk, a fishing village on the Dutch coast. The article referenced Neo-Lamarckian beliefs regarding the evolution of each culture:

> "The inhabitants of each section have their own dialect, their own idioms, and, what is more important to the photographer, their own costume and physique. The people of the Schwarzwald are small from long years of ploughing and harvesting. Their faces reflect the sunshine of the spring and summer and the protection their pleasant homes grant them in the winter; while our tall Katwyk [sic] fisherman tells at a glance of his battles with wave and wind."

The authors contrast the visually evident distinction between these peasants with the homogeneity of white American city dwellers who "possess the same general characteristics, wear the same dress, and resemble each other," offering no visual

indication of their traditional homelands—and thus no visual appeal. The authors find relief from modern urban life in the ease of visually distinguishing the wind-weathered face of a fisherman from the sun-kissed face of a farmer, carefully describing the match of each type's physique and landscape to their cultures' idiosyncrasies and behaviors. The authors assure readers that one cannot see any factories or trains and that Amsterdam feels "hundreds of miles" away. The refreshing distance from modernity and industrialization accords to Emerson's requirement for authentic racial types. The authors have intentionally sought out peasants of villages who appeared to be racially "pure" and to maintain their traditional lifestyles, style of dress, and simple mindedness. The authenticity of their premodernity is continuously invoked by describing the clearly observable differences between Gutach and Katwijk peoples—a difference that the camera is particularly poised to capture because of its capacity to visually and sentimentally link subjects to their surrounding landscapes.[43]

The aesthetic pleasure found for urban whites in the apprehension of pure European racial types was characteristic of a widespread slippage between art, ethnography, and popular culture. Though "Two Artists' Haunts" reads as a photographer's travel guide to newly discovered rural villages, both towns had established artist colonies from which artwork was produced for consumption by largely cosmopolitan audiences in New York and Europe who craved authentic views of premodern life. While Stieglitz was in school in Berlin during the 1880s, his family vacationed in Gutach where his father's friend Wilhelm Gustav Friedrich Hasemann had established an artist's colony. Hasemann's idealized character studies of Gutach farmers

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[43] Alfred Stieglitz and Louis H. Schubart, "Two Artists' Haunts," *Photographic Times* 26, no. 1 (January 1895): 9-12.

were already popular in Europe and the United States.[44] The family possessed an album of Hasemann's Gutach studies with which Stieglitz was certainly familiar as his photographs have a striking resemblance to many of them.[45] Meanwhile, Katwijk was a popular location for the Hague School of painters. Anthropologist Herman Roodenburg has demonstrated the interconnected relationship between artists, tourists, ethnographers, and racial pseudoscientists in popular secluded Dutch villages such as Katwijk. By framing these locations as secluded in time and space from Dutch cities, outsiders imagined that the villages' inhabitants were wished-for specimens of discreet primitive European races uncontaminated by modernity and its attendant race mixing.[46] Typical of ethnographic accounts describing encounters with Dutch populations "whose inclinations and emotions one has nothing in common," Stieglitz recounted the peculiar "serious and silent" nature of Katwijk's inhabitants:

> "We observed one man for two long days with spyglass to his eye, standing motionless, trying to pick out on the horizon one particular sail. Who knows what that weary vigil meant to him, but no change of expression told the tale. A sail came in sight, the watcher withdrew to his home—no smile, no expression of relief…"[47]

Stieglitz's frames the watcher's silence and lack of emotion as bizarre and unfamiliar. This apparently strange behavior poses as evidence that Katwijk culture has not been

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[44] Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 63-64.

[45] YCAL, Series XI, Box 245.

[46] Herman Roodenburg, "Making an Island in Time: Dutch Folklore Studies, Painting, Tourism, and Craniometryaround 1900," *Journal of Folklore Research* 39, no. 2/3, Special Double Issue: Dialogues (May-Dec, 2002), 173-199.

[47] Stieglitz and Schubart, "Two Artists' Haunts," 11-12.

contaminated by modern habits of emotion and sociality. Such accounts dovetailed with other "evidence" of the authenticity of a culture whose customs and biology were holistically intact—ethnographers' accounts, craniometrists measurements of skull adaptations to the environment, and artist portrayals of the aesthetic fit between the Dutch landscape, architecture, costume, and physique.[48] Together scientists and artists created an illusion for urban audiences of pure untouched races inhabiting a time and space secluded from the unnatural racial, technological jumble of modernity.

Unlike straightforward ethnographic photographs of human specimens, Stieglitz's photographs demonstrate racial difference through the physical and sentimental merging of his subjects with their native habitats.[49] Stieglitz's photographs made in Katwijk are in some cases nearly identical to the paintings by Hague School artists, such as Jozef Israëls. Stieglitz's *Mending Nets* (figure 32, 1894), for instance, resembles Israëls's *A Young Woman from Katwijk* (figure 33, 1862). Both portray a solitary woman on the beach leaning over the fishing nets she mends. In Stieglitz's photograph the woman's figure appears to merge with the landscape as the darkness of her clothing blends with the nets spread over the sand dunes. In Israëls's painting a similar effect is achieved. The woman's shawl and bonnet echo the nets spread before her on the dunes which again are reflected in the sails

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48 Craniometrist J.A.J. Barge linked the skull shape of people on the island of Marken to the tight caps children wore until age seven. J.A.J. Barge, *Friesche en Marker schedels. Bijdrage tot de kennis van de anthropologie der bevolking van Nederland* (Amsterdam: De Losco, 1912). Cited in Roodenburg, "Making an Island in Time," 194.

49 During the mid- and late nineteenth century, conventions for ethnographic photography varied widely. Travel photography and sentimental portraits were collected by ethnographers and the public alike as ethnographic documents. By the early twentieth century ethnographic photography began to adopt more standardized procedures for producing "objective" photographs that were unlike their popular and sentimental counterparts. See Melissa Banta and Curtis M Hinsley, *From Site to Sight: Anthropology, Photography, and the Power of Imagery* (Cambridge: Peabody Museum Press, 2017), 38-47; Christopher Pinney, "The Parallel Histories of Anthropology and Photography," in *Anthropology and Photography, 1840-1920*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 74–95.

Figure 32. *Mending Nets*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1894.

Figure 33. *A Young Woman from Katwijk*, by Jozef Israëls, 1862.

of the ships at sea. Both images speak of a holistically intact culture whose people are physically and sentimentally integrated with their landscape. This similarity served to demonstrate that an artistic hand-camera photograph was the result of as much patience, skill, and "interpretation" as a painting—perhaps accounting for why he celebrated *Mending Nets* as his pinnacle achievement until 1910 when it wordlessly disappeared from public view.[50] He described the photograph as standing the test of time because of the "torrent of poetic thoughts" he frequently experienced while meditating on the "endless dunes" surrounding the young woman engaging in the labor that composed "the very rudiment of her existence." He perceived in the photograph the primordial essence of a race—untouched and isolated in time and space. The hand-camera's newfangledness was in part overcome by its capacity to depict a scene that appeared in the present era as it has been for hundreds of years, confirming Katwijk's absolute distance from modernity in a way that appears to also ensure its continuance. Meditating on the photograph while at his Manhattan home, *Mending Nets* offered Stieglitz solace for the anxieties of modernity, by speaking to a timeless order of society that remained intact and unthreatened.

Such sentimental records of traditional racial types extended into the the page layouts for "The Hand-Camera—It's Present Importance," where Stieglitz included several additional types to his growing oeuvre of hand-camera photographs. To readers of *The Photographic Times*—where both articles appeared—these scenes were part of the same visual and textual fabric as popular travelogues, ethnographies, and eugenic

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50 At the *International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography* at the Albright Gallery in Buffalo, New York, *Mending Nets* appeared at the top center of Stieglitz's installation, printed larger than his other photographs. *The Steerage* was not exhibited in the show. The photograph was not exhibited or published by Stieglitz afterwards. Provenance appears in Greenough, *Key Set*, 126-127; See also Installation view of *International Exhibition Pictorial Photography*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery Records, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York.

composite photographs that presented a world divisible into distinct racial types in the journal's pages.[51] For "The Hand-Camera," Stieglitz added views of working-class Venetian women taken during the same European honeymoon tour. Unlike the German and Dutch peasants who were believed to descend from the Teutonic race, the Italian women were believed to belong to the Mediterranean "Etruscan" race.[52] Different working-class people were clearly contrasted to each other on the page layouts. The layouts reflect how the images were perceived to relate to one another. In one two-page spread an image of a Gutach woman working in the fields appears opposite an image of a Venetian woman retrieving water from a well (figure 29). Their postures are similarly stooped as they each engage in quotidian tasks, allowing for a comparison between their traditional attire, physiques and the environments. In another two-page spread, two Venetian women, again near the well, were placed opposite two Katwijk women who "gossip" on the beach (figure 31). Again their traditional dress and physiques are presented for comparison. With both images taken at a greater distance from their subjects, viewers could gather the full scope of the ways in which the women were suited to their environments. The bodies of the Venetian city-dwellers diminish in relation to the apartments behind them, while the bodies of the Dutch fisherfolk are juxtaposed with a fishing boat purposefully included at the left of the frame.

The question must be asked: How do these photographs substantiate Stieglitz's thesis for the hand-camera's "present importance" to art? On the one hand they demonstrate that the hand-camera can overcome its problematic association with the

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51 See for example, "A Photographic Anthropological Expedition," *The Photographic Times* 23, no. 641 (December 29, 1893): 777-779; "Composite Photographs," *The Photographic Times* 25, no. 681 (October 5, 1894): 217-220.

52 Josiah Clark Nott and George R. Gliddon, *Types of Mankind*, seventh edition (Philadelphia : Lippincott, Grambo & Co., 1855), 98-99.

artificial snapshots of modernity—"a fad… well-nigh on its last legs."[53] These photographs demonstrate that the hand-camera is capable of all the purities with which Emerson is concerned: a scene purified of modernity, a photographer of pure European intellect, a racially pure subject. The hand-camera thus proves to be capable of making just as "serious work" as Emerson's camera fastened to a tripod on the ground or Israëls's canvas fastened to its easel. However, in suggesting that the hand-camera has "present importance" rather than merely equivalence to other arts, Stieglitz suggests an urgency to its adoption. He claims that the camera is "most excellently adapted" to pictorial photography because the ease of use allows a traveling photographer to become so "intimate with it that it will become second nature" to easily "bring it from his satchel and make an exposure;" enabling photographers to record the premodern lifestyles rapidly disappearing from the Western world.[54] This text set against the sheer array of photographs from different locales suggests that the naturalistic photographer outlined by Emerson has become a mobile subject traveling the world to confirm the assuring presence of intact ancient races across Europe. The hand-camera becomes an extension of his mobile vision—the unifying logic of the bourgeois male fantasy that sentimentally links each subject to its native geographical location and places them in a catalogue of types.

Stieglitz also presented urban scenes from Venice and New York in his catalogue. This might seem to juxtapose one of the world's most ancient cities with one of the world's most modern. However that juxtaposition also seems to place them not so much as different from each other, but unified by the sentimental visual logic of racial fantasy

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[53] Stieglitz, "The Hand-Camera," 19.

[54] Stieglitz, "The Hand-Camera," 22.

that situates urban life within the timeless order of western civilization. By this logic *Winter—Fifth Avenue* becomes another racial type—a subject sentimentally merged with his native environment. The harsh winter storm becomes analogous to the harsh weather of Katwijk to which each racial type physiologically adapts and within which each subject toils with humble resolve. Placed across from each other on the page layout, it appears that the hansom cab driver, like the Katwijk net mender, is engaging in labor that is the "very rudiment" of his existence.

By choosing a hansom cab driver Stieglitz also merged American and European cities as having an equivalent working-class "type." Whereas the hansom cab did not appear on New York streets until the 1860s, it had been invented in London in the 1830s and spread to other European cities.[55] In popular culture representations, hansom cab drivers were typically represented as British working-class types that fulfilled a fantasy of an intact racial and social order that was at the time challenged by the existence of factory work and labor disputes. Hansom cab drivers, like butlers or maids, were a class of workers that directly served the middle class and therefore conformed to middle-class ideals in their dress and mannerisms.[56] The presence of such a worker within the American urban landscape thus proposed an equivalence between Europe and America. Though the street on which the hansom cab drove had only recently been settled with residences and cobble-stone paving, the heavy snow obscuring the details of the background made less apparent the detectable differences between Fifth Avenue and its older European counterparts. The photograph thus resonated with the desire to see

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[55] James Cooper, Ray Mundy, and John Nelson, *Taxi! Urban Economies and the Social and Transport Impacts of the Taxicab* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010), 3.

[56] See for example Sherlock Holmes novels, Robert Louis Stevenson's stories *The Suicide Club* (1878) and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886).

American cities as the equivalent of European cities, with a social and racial order as intact on the American shore as it was imagined to be in Europe.

If the European pretense of Stieglitz's early photographs seems unremarkable—for surely white American civilization derived from Europe and was fitted within its history—it is due at least in part to how thoroughly naturalized settler paradoxes have become. Stieglitz's photographs have themselves performed some of that ideological labor, posing as cultural memory of an "old" New York naturally fit within the long history of European civilization. Lorenzo Veracini argues that settlers consistently seek to turn "someone else's place into space and then into place again. The latter place looks like the one the settlers left behind, or should. When it doesn't, the settler project needs to compensate."[57] Such compensation is evident in Stieglitz's effort to make photographs that portrayed America as having a history that is as long as Europe's. The technological and rhetorical labor required to make artistic photographs of New York illustrates how the logic of settler colonialism was a structural force behind the construction of American pictorial traditions. It is commonly recognized that the perceived need to dampen the modernity of New York and the newness of photography as an artistic medium were definitive of Stieglitz's early photographs of the city. However this was not merely a discursive move to establish American photography's legitimacy in a European-dominated art world, but was also underpinned by American desire for legitimacy as a civilized Western nation.

The artistic adoption of the hand camera was therefore tied to picturing the space and social composition of the settlement in accordance with its self-image. The temporal

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[57] Lorenzo Veracini, "Settler Colonialism as a Distinct Mode of Domination," in *Routledge Handbook of the Global History of Settler Colonialism*, Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini, eds., (London: Routledge, 2016).

distortions that made a new city appear old and its relatively new populations (in comparison to Indigenous inhabitants) appear authentically historical demonstrated the fact that settlers regard time and space as intrinsically malleable. Settlers do not "start from scratch" in the colony, but bring what Patrick Wolfe calls the "preaccumulation" of cultural traditions, racial values, and technological assets to "new" places. Just as they alter land with their preaccumulated resources, so too do they manipulate time to complete the sleight of hand whereby they have not come to a "new" place but instead "returned" to a more pristine social order.[58] The adoption of the hand camera and the subsequent evolution of modernist photography demonstrates how settlers dealt with the coming of a new era in which the overwhelming visibility of modern technology threatened their fragile construction of time, space, and social order.

## Supplying New York with an Ancient Past

Around the turn of the century Stieglitz made critical edits to the public face of his oeuvre that would shape the idea of modernism in photography, ceasing to publish or exhibit nearly all of the types that appeared in "Hand Camera—Its Present Importance." By the time he made *The Steerage,* the only types he continued to showcase were *Mending Nets* and *Winter—Fifth Avenue*. His continued regard for *Winter—Fifth Avenue* was due at least in part to the attention bestowed upon the image by art critic Sadakichi Hartmann, who singled the image out in his published review of Stieglitz's 1897

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58 Veracini, "Settler Colonialism as a Distinct Mode of Domination," 5-6; Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016), 19-20.

portfolio *Picturesque Bits of New York and Other Studies*, which, despite its title, was comprised mostly of photographs made in Europe.[59] Hartmann dismissed *The Letter Box* (1894) as "merely a genre study," despised "cheap" coloration added to *The Glow of Night* (1897), and criticized the "sensationalism" of the darkroom-manipulated sky in *Winter Sky* (c. 1897), while applauding *Winter—Fifth Avenue* as a "realistic expression of an everyday occurrence of metropolitan life." He encouraged Stieglitz to turn more seriously toward picturesque studies of New York City to "gain himself a place in our art life which also the future art historian cannot overlook."[60]

Following this publication, Hartmann became the most significant influence on Stieglitz until 1907.[61] Several scholars have traced the importance of Hartmann's influence upon Stieglitz's evolving notion of art photography at the turn of the century. Sarah Greenough, in her catalogue, *Alfred Stieglitz: The Key Set,* notes that Stieglitz began to focus more intently upon depicting urban scenes in response to Hartmann's criticism and praise.[62] In *Creative Composites: Modernism, Race, and the Stieglitz Circle*, Lauren Kroiz identifies Hartmann's fondness of *Winter—Fifth Avenue* and notion of "picturesque" urban photography as a major influence upon what would become the cornerstone of modernist photography: the "straight" photograph.[63]

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[59] *The Letter Box* was the only one of the images that continued to be exhibited and published for a few years afterwards, likely because it continued to win awards, such as a silver medal later in 1898 at the American Institute. See Greenough, *The Key Set*, 181; Stieglitz's vulnerability to the praise, criticism, or indifference of critics frequently caused him to selectively withdraw or promote images that were commented upon. See Greenough, *The Key Set*, xx.

[60] Sadakichi Hartmann, "An Art Critic's Estimate of Alfred Stieglitz," *The Photographic Times* 30, no. 1 (January 1898), 257-262.

[61] Jane Calhoun Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critial Modernist, Collected Art Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 9.

[62] Greenough, *The Key Set*, xxi.

[63] Kroiz, *Creative Composites,* 15-30.

The term "straight photography" had originally emerged from a divide between schools of thought about photography in the 1880s. The original straight photographers were members of the Linked Ring who opposed the kinds of overt staging and compositing practiced by Henry Peach Robinson and his followers, as well as the overtly blurred images popular with some photographers.[64] The term then indicated photographs whose naturalism had neither been breached nor fabricated by the manipulation of the photographic apparatus, negatives, nor prints. Following the publication of Paul Strand's work in *Camera Work* in 1917 the term would become more strict, indicating an "absolute unqualified objectivity" that required a "pure" use of the medium "without tricks of process or manipulation."[65] Kroiz notes the inconsistent and malleable definition of straight photography as it was outlined in both essays and photographs throughout the years of *Camera Notes* and *Camera Work*.[66] Kroiz argues that Hartmann's notion of picturesque photography was on the vanguard of straight photography for its time because it was at once medium-specific and also attuned the cultural plurality of New York's immigrant neighborhoods. Kroiz finds that the picturesque was a precursor to the straight photograph, which stepped away from Emersonian notions of racial purity toward a notion of photography that could embrace racial difference by aesthetically taming the foreignness of immigrants.[67]

I instead use the term "proto-straight" to refer to the discursive form of photography during this period leading up to the more starkly sharp modernism that

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[64] Robin Lenman, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the Photograph* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), s.v. "straight photography."

[65] Paul Strand, "Photography," *Camera Work* 49-50 (June 1917), 2-3.

[66] Kroiz, *Creative Composites,* 38-39, 47-48, 101-105.

[67] Kroiz, *Creative Composites,* 15-30.

materialized in the 1910s. This term invokes Geoffrey Batchen's use of "proto-photographers" in his account of the years leading up to photography's invention, where "proto" signals that the very wish for a photograph to exist contained within it an expectation for the kind of ideological work such a thing might perform.[68] The suffix intentionally disrupts the typical timelines for beginnings and endings—discursive work I find necessary in order to disrupt the way modernist photography's timeline naturalized the settlement's ideological one. Following Batchen and diverging from Kroiz's argument, I argue that proto-straight photography, like the proto-*Steerage*, indicated the wish for photography to perform ideological work that would confirm the racial purity of the settlement with the factual objectivity of the camera. Around the turn of the century Stieglitz and his milieu began to conceptualize new possibilities for the art photograph's relationship to the real—tentatively proposing that the photographer might begin to embed himself more directly in increasingly complex scenes, while still maintaining much of Emerson's racial ideals.[69] In what follows I retrace some of the same ground first covered by—examining Hartmann's statements on picturesque photography alongside Stieglitz's lower Manhattan photographs.[70] However my study draws upon supplementary material that highlights the function of the picturesque to naturalize settler mythological histories and search out visions of racial purity. My analysis of the picturesque as an important landmark in the evolution of American photographic modernism points not only to how Stieglitz sought to subdue the strangeness of

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68 Geoffrey Batchen, *Burning with Desire: The Conception of Photography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997).

69 Sadakichi Hartmann, "A Plea for Straight Photography," *American Amateur Photographer* 16 (March 1904): 101–109.

70 See Lauren Kroiz, Creative Composites: Modernism, Race, and the Stieglitz Circle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 11-48.

Manhattan's immigrants, but also to how the picturesque was an aesthetic balm for settler anxieties regarding the fraught relationship between the United States and Europe.

Submerged in Hartmann's calls for a medium-specific photography that would not imitate painting was a need to legitimate settler culture as authentic American expression, rather than merely derivative of European culture. Hartmann voiced a belief that fine art photographers should adhere to the aesthetics of their own medium by selecting "unpaintable or strictly photographic subjects," while also disparaging of "the imitation of foreign models."[71] Hartmann envisioned the emergence of a vibrant and sophisticated American arts scene, equivalent to—yet distinct from—the European arts sphere. Upper class, born in Japan, raised in Germany, and immigrating to the United States as a teenager, Hartmann was reportedly "Americanized" by Walt Whitman's personal mentorship during his youth.[72] His rhetoric was characteristic of the settler's need to navigate the complicated relationship between European and American identity. Stieglitz and Harmann shared a special relationship because they had both been at one point immersed in German culture, but were now whole-heartedly dedicated to proving the merits of American art. Hartmann published his own American art journal *The Art Critic* and volumes on American art history. Even though it is true that he had a "composite" identity, as Kroiz argues, it is also true that this composite identity was characteristically American.[73]

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[71] Sadakichi Hartmann, *Landscape and Figure Composition* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Company, 1910), 57; Hartmann, "Die Kunst Photographie in ihrer Beziehung zur Malerei," (Art Photography and Its Relationship to Painting), *New Yorker Status-Zeitung*, January 30, 1898; Jane Calhoun Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann: Critical Modernist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 89-98.

[72] Weaver, *Sadakichi Hartmann,* 1-15.

[73] Kroiz, *Creative Composites*, 12-14.

As Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson argue, settlers arrive in the the colony under various circumstances, for various reasons, and during various periods, but retain limited allegiance to their home countries. The feeling "of being European subjects but no longer European citizens" that had, during the Colonial period and Revolutionary War, created "the feeling of being colonized," remained in other aspects of American life in which Americans regarded Europe as wielding authority from overseas.[74] Since the Colonial period whites' political legitimacy in North America was based upon the belief that they carried with them a cultural superiority and political sovereignty derived from their European heritage. However during the Revolutionary War Europe was regarded as a common adversary among white settlers—an Other against which Americanness became a legible identity. By drawing distinctions between Americans and Europeans, Americans forged a sense of unity among disparate groups of whites who originated from diverse European nations and arrived during different time periods, motivated by different factors. This was however a paradoxical relationship: Europe was the source of American cultural legitimacy—their racial superiority over those whose labor and land they extracted—yet the visible presence of European culture also exposed the fallacy of America's distinction from Europe. The sustained presence of European culture within the United States thus provided an important ideological purpose for unifying settlers. Even by the twentieth century, public fantasies of cleansing the settlement of its Europeanness continued to soothe anxieties regarding settlers' belonging together as a unified people and belonging on "homelands" to which they were foreigners.[75]

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[74] Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, "Settler Colonies," in A Companion to Postcolonial Studies, eds. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 362-363.

[75] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 33-34.

Johnston and Lawson describe settler culture as one founded upon mimicry—a distinctive formation of Homi Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry. In settler colonial mimicry the settler mimics both European culture and indigeneity in a desire for authority and authenticity, but in each case proves to be "almost the same but not quite" European or indigenous.[76] The cultural project of "working through the settler's anxieties and obsessions in textual form" is never complete, but instead becomes an untiring means of constructing settler belonging.[77] Settler visual culture is thus perpetually addressed to the absent authority of Europe in an anxious desire for legitimacy.[78]

Eruptions of such rhetoric in the arts at the turn of the century betray an American anxiousness driving the development of modernism. Hartmann's initial entreaties to American photographers for a medium-specificity that would distinguish American photography from European art invites the question: How was photography employed to assuage anxieties about Americans' fraught relationship to Europe? How was photography's facticity—the unique quality of the medium—suited to the paradoxical entanglements of mimicry and authenticity characteristic of settler visual culture?

Hartmann's "A Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York," published in Stieglitz's *Camera Notes* in 1900, spoke of American photographers' self-conscious relationship to Europe. "I am well aware that much is lacking here which makes European cities so interesting and inspiring to the sightseer and artist. No monuments of past glory, no cathedral spires or Gothic grandeur, no historic edifices," Hartmann acknowledged.

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[76] Johnston and Lawson, "Settler Colonies," 369-370, 369; Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 85-92.

[77] The result of this process is total cultural and symbolic displacement of Indian cultures. Johnston and Lawson, "Settler Colonies," 362-363.

[78] Johnston and Lawson, "Settler Colonies," 370.

However, he believed this was also the unique photographic potential of the city. Because "the eye [had] not yet got used to" the picturesqueness of New York, the city held the unparalleled potential to help photographers abandon their "homage to imitation" and instead make pictures "genuinely American in spirit."[79] He presented New York as an untapped aesthetic frontier for nurturing American pride: "But who will be the first to venture on these untrodden fields and teach New Yorkers to love their city…?"; a challenge that echoed his words to Stieglitz a few years prior when encouraging him to pioneer photography of the city.[80] His "plea" for picturesque photography was thus also a self-conscious appeal to establish America's legitimacy as a site of cultural heritage and cultural production.

Hartmann's text however drew upon aesthetic notions of the picturesque originating in Europe. The article described his 1897 "slumming expedition" to lower Manhattan with Parisian artist Jean-François Raffaëlli.[81] ("Slumming" was a popular leisure time sightseeing activity for middle-class New Yorkers.) Hartmann had also discussed his slumming expedition in an interview with Raffaëlli published in his monthly column *The Art News*, where he commended the artist's "truthful impressions" of commonplace subjects.[82] Raffaëlli was known for his paintings of working-class

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[79] Sadakichi Hartmann, "A Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York," *Camera Notes* 4, no. 1 (July 1900): 92-94.

[80] Hartmann, "A Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York," 91-97.

[81] An 1884 newspaper article announced slumming as a new fashion for Manhattan "ladies" and "gentlemen" seeking out the direst poverty and squalor for entertainment. It distinguishes between London slumming which often had social reform aims, and New York slumming which was done purely for fun and curiosity. "Slumming in this Town: A Fashionable London Mania Reaches New York," *New York Times*, September 14, 1884, 4; See Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago, University of Chicago Prass, 2009), 1-10.

[82] Sadakichi Hartmann, "A Conversation with Jean Francois Raffaelli about American Art," *The Art News* 1, no. 2 (April 1897), 3-4.

subjects who had been pushed to live in squalid conditions on the outskirts of modernizing Paris. In Raffaëlli's paintings impoverished Parisians were not considered in light of political or humanitarian concerns, but instead suggested poetic truths that resonated with Parisian bourgeoisie's nostalgia for premodern ways of life. For instance, Raffaëlli's portrayal of ragpickers embodied ideals of freedom; not reliant upon wage labor or routinized schedules, they indicated to Parisians that, at the margins of industrialized capitalism's regulating of everyday life, there still existed the liberties of a simple life.[83] While visiting New York in 1897 Raffaëlli requested that Hartmann take him to New York's slums. Hartmann reported that the streets typically visited on middle-class New Yorkers' slumming expeditions were not decayed enough for Raffaëlli's tastes. After much hunting the pair turned onto a street of "dilapidated red brick houses with black fire-escapes covered all over with bedding, clothes lines, and all sorts of truck," that inspired Raffaëlli to make several snapshot studies for his paintings.[84] Hartmann and Raffaëlli pushed beyond the "standard" tourist slums that were too new for their tastes. Their eventual discovery of "authentic" picturesque slums legitimized New York through the European artist's gaze. Their discovery of wished-for urban ruins and the filthy traces of bare life teeming in their midst confirmed for Hartmann America's possession of an authentic antiquity and subject matter fit for the fine arts.

Decaying buildings covered with the laundry and odds and ends conformed to the aesthetics of the picturesque, which valued irregularity and disorder as qualities considered distinct from the idealizing of "beautiful" scenes of traditional arts. The theory of the picturesque was outlined by Uvedale Price in six volumes of essays at the

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[83] Mernin Young, "Heroic Indolence: Realism and the Politics of Time in Raffaëlli's 'Absinthe Drinkers,'" *The Art Bulletin* 90, no. 2 (June 2008): 249-253.

[84] Hartmann, "A Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York," 94.

turn of the nineteenth century. Price described the picturesque as discrete from the beautiful and the sublime. Picturesque art did not value the smoothness and balance of the beautiful nor the terror and overwhelm of the sublime, but instead prized the roughness, variation, and irregularity materialized in nature, ruins, and scenes of poverty. According to Price, the mismatch between differing rhythms of form was particularly picturesque—places of contact between the natural and the manmade, the wild and the tame, the smooth and the rough.[85] Throughout his writing Hartmann echoed Price's valuation of variation and irregularity as an aesthetics of truthfulness. This appropriation of picturesque aesthetics represented an imitation of European painting—"almost the same"—apparently defying Hartmann's entreaties to cease imitations of Europe and other media. But making picturesque photography was considered a particularly American innovation—"almost the same but not quite." Because the picturesque was an aesthetic of "truth," it fit Hartmann's desire for medium-specific American photography. The picturesque was regarded as an un-idealized portrayal of American scenery. He specified that to render scenes truthfully was not merely to "plagiarize"—or copy them exactly—but as described by Dürer (in a quotation that repeatedly accompanied his praise for Stieglitz): "Art is hidden in nature and he that can tear her out of it, wins her."[86] According to Hartmann, heavily manipulated photographs over-idealized scenes before the lens in an attempt to imitate other arts. Also undesirable was an exact mechanical copy of nature—like a snapshot—made without the artist's discernment: mere

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[85] Uvedale Price, *Essays on the Picturesque as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Volume 1 (London: J. Mawman, 1810), 21-64.

[86] Hartmann repeats this quote in "The Photo-Secession, A New Pictorial Movement," *The Craftsman* 6, no. 1 (April 1904), 33; and "An Art Critic's Estimate of Alfred Stieglitz," 262; Emerson also uses this quote in Emerson, *Naturalistic Photography,* 23; "Nature" here refers most closely to "reality" rather than a distinction between nature and civilization.

"plagiarism." In distinction, the picturesque photograph neither copied reality nor idealized it, but made visible "real" artworks already latent in American life and revealed by the artistic genius of the photographer. The picturesque's proposed relationship to "real" artworks was thus a suitable proto-straight photography that was both more honest and more American than the typical art photographs of the era. By applying picturesque aesthetics to depicting Manhattan, Hartmann believed that the artist could simply "tear" art from the real life of Manhattan—authenticating America and photography both as not merely derivative of Europe.

Though the British notion of the picturesque was nearly a century old by the time of Hartmann's writing, its aesthetics were popular in America during the time of Hartmann and Stieglitz's childhoods. It became popular during the lead up to the United States' centennial with the publication of *Picturesque America* (1872-1874), an oversized two-volume book set displayed on thousands of parlor tables across the country.[87] The book pictured scenes of America's towns, cities, and wilderness areas from every corner of its territories in more than nine hundred picturesque engravings. While the engravings were made by several artists and pictured scenes as divergent as cacti gardens in Florida, a civic fountain in Boston, and the towering mountains of the Sierras, the undeviating picturesque aesthetic created the appearance of a united whole. The book thus satisfied yearnings for national unity after the vast expansion of occupied territory during the first half of the century and the traumatic schism of the Civil War, along with the turn toward

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[87] Hartmann immigrated to the US in 1881, several years after the publication of *Picturesque America*. However demand for picturesque engravings of similar style and content increased in the years following the publication's initial success and the advancement reproduction technology. Some of the volumes' artists, such as Harry Fenn experienced the height of their careers in the 1880s. Sue Rainey, *Creating a World on Paper: Harry Fenn's Career in Art* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 159-190.

an industrialized economy that followed.[88] These episodes in the first century of the nation's independence muddled the practicability of cohesion within the "United" States of America; the many populations, territories, and ways of life within its borders appeared discontinuous with each other. The unified style of the engravings stitched together disparate realities of the continent while the picturesque renderings suggested a natural fit between American civilization and the landscape. The picturesque's emphasis upon placing the irregular forms of wilderness and decay together with the manmade communicated ancientness and timelessness, envisioning the settlement and industrialization of the United States as belonging together within an eternal natural order.[89] *Picturesque America* thus established picturesque aesthetics as a mode for legitimizing settlers' belonging together and upon occupied territory.

*Picturesque America* was a project of settler visual culture that bridged acts of territorial expansion during the mid-nineteenth century with what Frederick Jackson Turner would name as the expansion of the "new frontier" in which the American society's former "frontier experience" shaped the cultural sphere during the late nineteenth century.[90] Editor William Cullen Bryant's stated goal was to extend the activity of settlement to the arts: "Art sighs to carry her conquests into new realms." Whereas in Europe "every spot remarkable" had been "studied and sketched again and again" and "regarded from every point of view," the American territory "abounds with

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[88] For discussion of the relationship between the Civil War and *Picturesque America* see Sue Rainey, *Creating* Picturesque America: *Monument to the Natural and Cultural Landscape* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1994), 22-26.

[89] William Cullen Bryant, *Picturesque America: or, The Land We Live In*, vol. 1 (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1872); William Cullen Bryant, *Picturesque America: or, The Land We Live In*, vol. 2 (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1872).

[90] Turner, *The Frontier in American History,* 205-206, 264-265.

scenery new to the artist's pencil." The ambitious project of nearly one thousand engravings and massive distribution extended the activity of settlement into the cultural sphere by acquainting Americans with "innumerable places which lie out of the usual path of our artists and tourists" that will "for the first time, become familiar to the general public through these pages."[91] Bryant thus imagined that picturesque art and its appreciation amounted to a new frontier ripe for cultural settlement. This sentiment was reflected in engravings that nearly invariably depicted whites on foot in the act of trekking, drawing, or admiring American scenes that were "newly explored" or "yet unvisited by sketchers."[92] These depictions united various modes of engaging with the landscape as the activities of settlement in which American identity was rooted. Cullen's goals were thus part of the era's widespread national trend to regenerate a sense of national strength by uniting behind representations of the settler as the ideal American citizen.[93]

The recurring trope of genteel white Americans dwarfed by monumental American nature portrayed the activity of settlement as an approachable pastime for middle-class Americans. The figures allowed whites to imagine themselves embedded in such scenery while the accompanying texts offered detailed walking tours of the pictured locales, sometimes originating at hotels where the reader might stay. Stieglitz and his father took one such tour during their 1873 summer vacation to Western New York where they lodged at the Catskill Mountain House, which *Picturesque America*

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[91] William Cullen Bryant, Preface to *Picturesque America*, Vol. 1, iii-iv. There were two versions of the preface. The quote refers to the later version, signed by Bryant.

[92] Bryant, *Picturesque America*, vol. 1, iv.

[93] Matthew Crow, "Atlantic North America from Contact to the Late 19th Century," *Routledge Handbook of the Global History of Settler Colonialism*, Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini, eds., (London: Routledge, 2016), 104-106.

recommended as the starting point for New Yorkers journeying to the Catskills—"the shrine of summer pilgrimage."[94] Harry Fenn pictured the Catskill Mountain House and the picturesque sites that might be accessed from there. *Under the Catskill Falls* (figure 34, 1874) pictures a hiker standing on an outcrop in the foreground. The text invites the reader to imagine himself in the scene: "Standing on the narrow pathway, you look through the great white veil of falling waters, leaping out over your head."[95] With his face turned upward reflecting a light that seems to emanate from the Catskill Falls, the hiker functions as a stand-in for the reader of *Picturesque America* who imagines feeling "rapt in admiration" if he were in the hiker's shoes.[96] The waterfall occupies the entire height of the composition, its uppermost crest and bottommost rapids extending beyond the frame of the engraving. At the left middle ground, a bourgeois male and female pair also gaze at the falls. Their diminutive size in relation to the water indicates the monumental scale of the natural wonder. The couple wears sophisticated attire in contrast to the hiker with his backpack and trekking pole, suggesting that rugged exploration and aesthetic appreciation are complimentary means of treasuring the nation's natural resources.

The engraving also showcases the picturesque features that communicate the site's ancientness. Contrasted to the smooth water that falls forcefully through the center of the composition are the scraggly trees beyond the falls, misshapen by their long-standing

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[94] Henry A. Brown, "The Catskills," in *Picturesque America*, Vol. 2, 116-118; Though *Picturesque America* did not publish the Catskills segment until the next year in 1874, Catskills Mountain House was already a popular destination for New Yorkers in search of the picturesque. Many of *Picturesque America*'s engravings and texts appeared prior to the release of the two-volume set in the popular illustrated newspaper *Appletons' Journal* as early as 1870. Rainey, *Creating* Picturesque America, xv, 148. The handbill that Edward Stieglitz saved from their trip features a picturesque engraving of Catskill Mountain House. YCAL Series IX, Box 244, folder 4302.

[95] Brown, "The Catskills," 122.

[96] Brown, "The Catskills," 117.

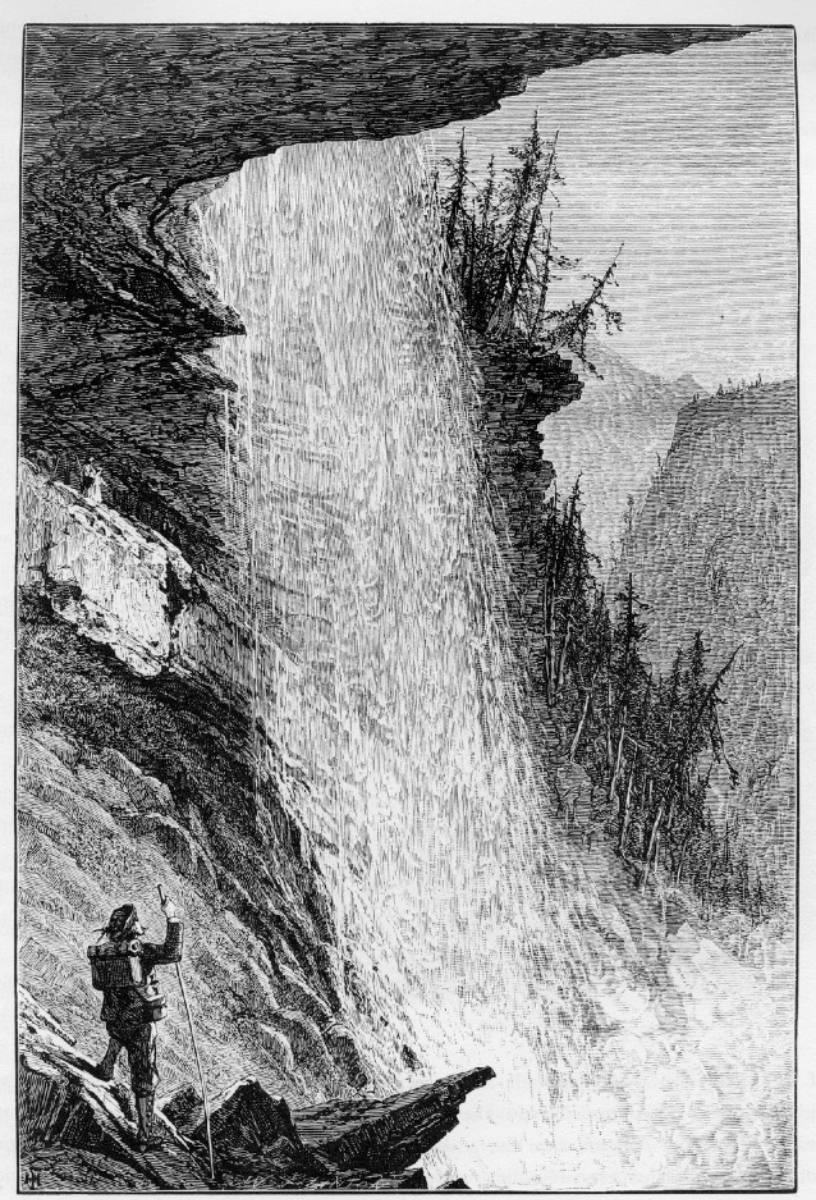


Figure 34. *Under the Catskill Falls*, by Harry Fenn, 1874.

struggle to grow upon an inhospitable cliffside. The rock faces display varying rhythms and patterns. The meeting of the rounded and the jagged, the smooth and the irregular, testifies to the long course of geological time, illustrating that the distinguished ancient history of the nation is on par Europe's rich heritage. The text makes clear that the wonderment of the Catskills rivals any that might be found in Europe—"even among the Alps of Switzerland"—consistent with the Bryant's goal to portray the nation's natural wonders, parks, and civic architecture as comparable with those of timeworn European nations.[97]

*Picturesque America* also visualized developed sites of settlement as a convergence of manmade and natural forms consonant with the irregularity and variety valued in picturesque aesthetics.[98] Industrializing towns and cities were pictured as sites in which humans, nature, and industry intermingled harmoniously in a timeless order. In *Pittsburg, from Reservoir* (figure 35, 1874), Alfred R. Waud pictured the industrializing Pennsylvania city viewed from the impoverished outskirts looking toward the thriving city center. The deteriorating architectural forms of the working-class shantytown contrast picturesquely with the measured even forms of the civic architecture and the church steeples that pierce the horizon. Eddies of coal smoke from the factories meet the smooth sky, rendering industrialization as if it were as natural as the meeting of still and flowing waters. In the foreground a working-class mother and her child tend to livestock and drying laundry. The animals stand alert, apprising viewers of approaching hikers at the right foreground. The hikers with backpacks and walking sticks indicate that just beyond the frame is the unpictured raw American wilderness from which they encounter

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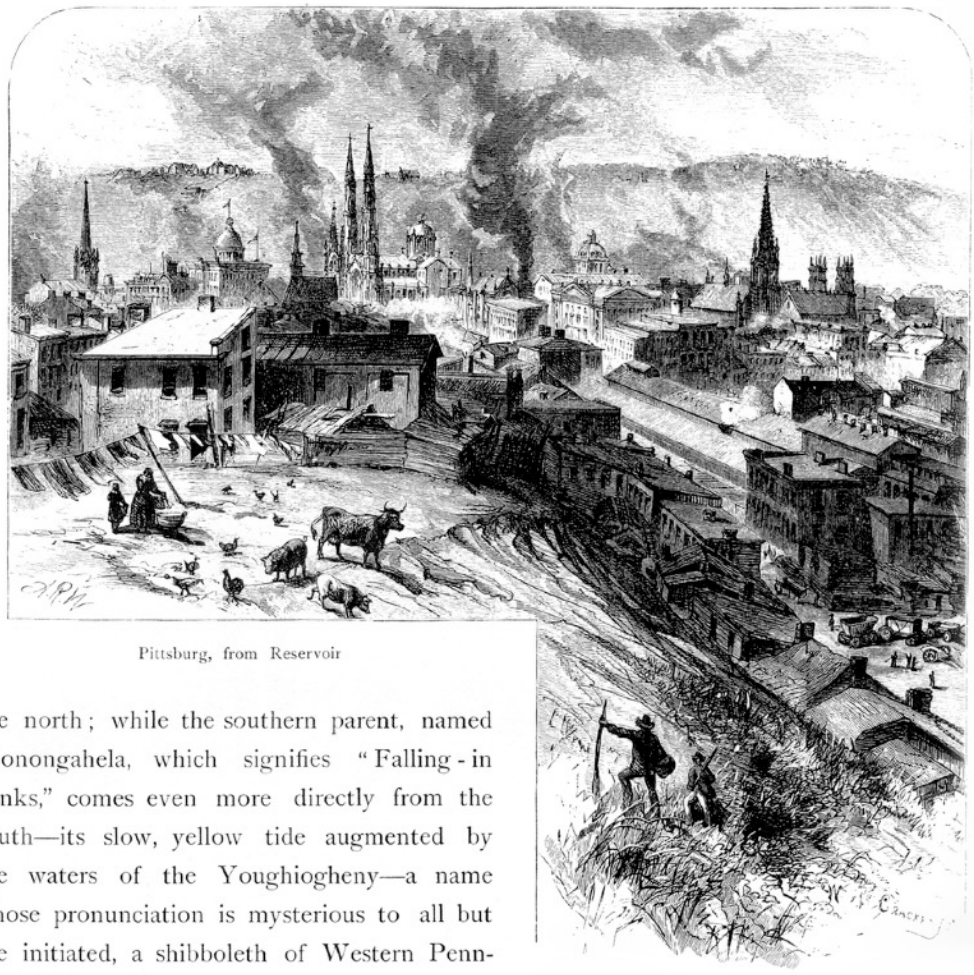
[97] Bryant, *Picturesque America*, vol. 1, iii-iv; Rainey, *Creating* Picturesque America, xiii-xvii, 195-273.

[98] Bryant, *Picturesque America*, vol. 2.



Pittsburg, from Reservoir

the north; while the southern parent, named Monongahela, which signifies "Falling-in banks," comes even more directly from the south—its slow, yellow tide augmented by the waters of the Youghiogheny—a name whose pronunciation is mysterious to all but the initiated, a shibboleth of Western Pennsylvania. These two rivers, so unlike in their

Figure 35. *Pittsburg, from Resevoir*, by Alfred R. Waud, 1874.

the city. Picturesque aesthetics function to situate the city's poverty and industrial growth within the timeless order of things—the eternal tension between growth and decay, civilization and wilderness, order and chaos.

Throughout *Picturesque America* working-class people are depicted performing traditional forms of manual labor. Only the exteriors of factories appear, demonstrating the picturesque fit of industrial architecture within the landscape. The realities of modern labor within them are veiled in favor of old-fashioned manual labor that connected the working classes of America to the traditional peasants of Europe.[99] The power of picturesque aesthetics to make such unpleasant realities benign relied upon the removal of historical specificity from an artwork's subjects. Its focus on the visual appeal of scenes of decay, ruin, overgrowth, and poverty deflected attention from current and historical events. Scenes depicting labor instead appeared to belong to a timeless premodernity. By aestheticizing contemporary scenes that might otherwise appear alarming to the middle class, artists turned current realities of poverty and industrialization into assurances that traditional ways of life continued untouched by industrialization's threat to the eternal order of things. Picturesque images thus trained Americans to see the possibly troubling facts in the world around them as signs of the intactness of the nation.

The text accompanying the engravings also served to assuage settler anxieties. On the one hand the texts claim an authentic, timeless, and spiritual American relationship to the land, expressed by a reverence for the nation's monumental treasures. But on the other hand the authenticity of this relationship is betrayed by the texts' perpetual address to Europe and in the frequent comparisons between the wonders of the United States

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[99] For discussion of representations of labor in *Picturesque America*, see Rainey, *Creating* Picturesque America, 263-273.

and those of Europe. Similarly, the nation's legitimacy is also forged by a supposed timelessness—an eternal racial order, traditional modes of labor, ancient geological formations—premised on Europe's own racial order, premodern labor, ancient wonders. This also shows a self-conscious address to Europe—to claim legitimacy by being, as Bhabha says, "almost the same but not quite" Europe.

The stitching together of the ancient and the modern to legitimize American settlement also erased the realities of violent conquest. The ancient past appears to be present in modern-day America as geological formation and intact racial order, yet shows nearly no trace of the territory's indigenous inhabitants and traditions. Though some of the most violent encounters between settlers and Indians occurred during the decades after the Civil War and during the making of *Picturesque America*, these present-day realities are largely overlooked.[100] Indians do appear in the texts and engravings, however, in idyllic scenes of the West and Midwest—canoeing, bathing in rivers, gathered in small family groups, or merely represented as teepees paralleling distant mountains.[101] These depictions of Indians engaging in traditional activities imagined untouched lifestyles and

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[100] Crow, "Atlantic North America from Contact to the Late 19th Century," 105; Under President Ulysses S. Grant's leadership after the Civil War from 1869 to 1877, some of the most genocidal campaigns against Indian resistance in the West took place. These were often carried out American military troops made up of emancipated blacks, poor Irish and German immigrants, and Jews who had joined the military during the Civil War and continued to serve after the war for food, shelter, and pay. Major assaults against the Cheyenne, Nimi'ipuu (Nez Perce), Sioux, Apache, Kiowa, Ute, Kickapoo, Comanche communities took place in the 1870s and 1880s. These assaults included murders, incarceration, displacement, and kidnapping of children, resulting in near or total decimation of these communities. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 146-153; See also Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Mari Sandoz, *Cheyenne Autumn* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992). Originally published in 1953; Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); See chapter two, n82.

[101] See *Picturesque America*, vol. 2, 168, 425, 538, 546; *Picturesque America*, vol. 1, 34, 46, 48, 50, 480-482.

small benign groups rather than depicting the realities of Indian resistance and settler violence that would have been more characteristic of the present-day encounters between whites and Indians.

In addition, each locale's walking tour almost invariably begins with a reference to Indians—as the source of place names, to recall a historic battle, or to invoke the prior significance of a place in Indian history. The texts however state that anything more than a surface musing about Indian histories is beyond the scope of the text: "A round two hundred and fifty years are all for which the Muse of History considers herself responsible;" inviting the viewer instead to sense in an "atmosphere's peace and quiet" evidence that "aeons of happy years" have existed at the same sites that settlers now enjoy.[102] Here, history is synonymous with the beginning of the Colonial period, suggesting that Indians had no history of their own. The text relegates Indians to a time outside of history and an abstract musing on peaceful ways of life. The only Indian histories that carry the weight of historical evidence are largely battles. The picturesque was thus an aesthetic "sleight of hand" by which Americans propagated usable pasts. Walter L. Hixson defines usable pasts as the "historical distortion and denial [which] are endemic to settler colonies" who must create national mythologies to naturalize their nation's origins and displace indigenous pasts. While usable pasts largely erase Indian pasts they also absorb that which remains into the dominant culture as a form of nostalgia or pretense of appreciation.[103] Thus the mission of the picturesque originally established by Price in Britain—to reject idealization in favor of contact with the reality of the world's irregularities—was thus fitted in America to the settler project. On the one

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[102] R. E. Garczynski, "The Mohawk, Albany, and Troy," in *Picturesque America*, vol. 2, 457.

[103] Walter L. Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism: A History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 11-12; Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

hand it seemed to depict the nation truthfully, but in so doing encouraged white Americans to adopt a version of history and present-day realities cleansed of the violence of genocide and indigenous resistance along with other unpleasant realities such as industrialization, race-mixing, and poverty.

Picturesque depictions of New York City were no exception to the rule. *Picturesque America*'s encounter with the city indicates the limits of what could be pictured picturesquely. The Manhattan chapter, written by Oliver Bell Bunce and illustrated by Fenn, enters the city at its southern harbor, following the same route as the island's earliest Dutch colonists. Like many of the other texts, Bunce opens the chapter by noting anodyne indigenous trivia—that Manhattan is named after an Indian tribe long gone. Bunce includes no other mentions of indigenous pasts, despite the fact that the opening walking tour follows an indigenous route from a former Lenape village at the Battery to Trinity Church at the southern origin point of Broadway—originally an Indian trade route extending to present-day Montreal that the Lenape shared with other tribal nations.[104] Fenn's illustration of Broadway reveals the trade route's continued prominence in the New York landscape as a wide crevice of bustling human activity cut through a dense expanse of architecture.[105] This omission of the indigenous history indicates that how completely Manhattan's Lenape past had been eclipsed by settler

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104 Bunce, "New York and Brooklyn," 548-553; Evan T. Pritchard, *Native New Yorkers: The Legacy of the Algonquin People of New York* (Chicago: Council Oak Books, 2002), 4.

105 Bunce, "New York and Brooklyn," 553; Evan T. Pritchard, *Native New Yorkers: The Legacy of the Algonquin People of New York,* (San Francisco: Council Oak Books, 2002), 4; Dutch and English maps show that by 1613 the Dutch began to build houses along what would become Broadway. It continued to be traveled by Indians and Europeans during the colonial period and thus formed the central corridor around which the early settlement was built. See I.N. Phelps, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island, 1498-1909: Compiled from Original Sources and Illustrated by Photo-Intaglio Reproductions of Important Maps, Plans, Views, and Documents in Public and Private Collections* (New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1915).

amnesia by the nineteenth century. The island was initially occupied by the 270 Dutch settlers who "purchased" the island in 1626 and lived "peacefully" with Indians in their midst.[106] Within several decades, British settler Daniel Denton declared of the Lenape that they had simply disappeared "by the Hand of God," indicating the near total decimation of the Lenape by European diseases.[107] While these histories were well within the 250-year "responsibility" of the "Muse of History" they were undoubtedly not fit for the picturesque's accounting of the pleasant memories of settlement.

Similarly, unlike many other *Picturesque America* walking tours that meandered through each locale, noting the sights a tourist might encounter on-foot, Bunce's New York tour simply jumps from the city ports to Washington Square Park to follow a narrow corridor along Fifth Avenue toward Central Park—skipping over the city's poorest neighborhoods and omitting its industrial areas with a brief explanation: "The artist has made no attempt to illustrate the varied features of the metropolis, but simply to give a glimpse or two by which the imagination might build up a tolerably correct idea."[108] Fenn and Bunce were perhaps at pains to find subject matter that did not fall out of the bounds of the picturesque's mandate in the slums of lower Manhattan, where middle-class viewers might view a spectacle of "the vast bodies of immigrants from the

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[106] Phelps, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island,* 11-13.

[107] Pritchard, *Native New Yorkers*, 39-40; Estimates state that around eighty to ninety percent of Manhattan's Lenape had died by the end of the seventeenth century due to murder by Europeans and contraction of European diseases. Early settler Daniel Denton stated, "it is to be admired, how strangely they have decrease by the Hand of God, since the English first setling of those parts." Herbert C. Kraft, *The Lenape: Archaeology, History, and Ethnography* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1986), 195-213; A 1723 census indicates that Manhattan was home to 5,886 whites and 1,362 nonwhites (likely enslaved Indians and Africans). Phelps, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island,* 190-191.

[108] Bunce, "New York and Brooklyn," 552.

Old World."[109] Fenn instead focused on the city's more refined civic sites—choosing streets, buildings, and parks notable for their comparison with European civic achievements, suggesting that the viewer's imagination, left to fill in the blanks from these fragmented "glimpses," would arrive at a "correct" picture of the city.[110] *Picturesque America*'s chapter on Manhattan thus demonstrated that the city's immigrant population, modernizing and industrialized areas, and violent histories of settlement posed a particular problem for the picturesque that could only be overcome by careful omission, selecting the agreeable surface details that most resembled European cities.

Though written twenty-five years after *Picturesque America*, Hartmann's foray into the picturesque in "A Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York" notably duplicates many of his predecessor's concerns, seeming to pick up where Bunce and Fenn left off. Hartmann constructed his own text as a walking tour, noting the sights and sensations "you" might experience when taking the same walk. He maintained the tradition of comparing American sites to their European counterparts and even revisited many of the same parks and boulevards as his predecessors. However Hartmann importantly expanded the reach of the picturesque to views that had not been permissible decades earlier, noting the "surprising beauty" of office buildings, comparing the skyline of skyscrapers to "the towers, turrets and battlements of some ancient fortress." Even the excavation of construction sites and construction of new steel-framed buildings were "something wonderful" to behold. This expansion of the picturesque into new areas did not, however, breach the bounds of the picturesque. Instead it followed through on Bryant's mandate that the picturesque's purpose was to educate American citizens in the

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[109] The text refers to immigrants only as entering through New York's harbor, but makes no reference to where they land after they arrive. Bunce, "New York and Brooklyn," 549.

[110] Bunce, "New York and Brooklyn," 553-560.

appreciation of American realities that were "newly explored" or "yet unvisited by sketchers."[111] Hartmann strikingly echoed Bryant in instructing photographers to "leave the big thoroughfares and go to the downtown back alleys" in order to "teach New Yorkers to love their own city."[112] The same sites that Bunce and Fenn had avoided, were for Hartmann's generation of photographers the unchartered territory that renewed the promise of the picturesque.

Hartmann was also careful to instruct his readers to stay on the surface and not venture too deeply into the politics of the slums. Though he recommends that photographers "depict the hunger and the filth of the slums, the unfathomable and inexhaustible misery," it is a metaphoric suffering and decay that he has in mind. He lists precisely which subject matter was unfit for the picturesque, instructing photographers to avoid:

> "men, groaning under heavy burdens of unsewn garments, [who] stagger along the sidewalk and disappear in the dark hallway of some Ludlow street tenement. They represent the dark side of Jewtown which neither legislation nor charity can altogether improve, but we have no time to follow them to the qualmy rooms of the sweatshops, the pictures there are too dreary and we are only in search of the picturesque."[113]

Hartmann suggests that such picturesque photographs "would teach us better than any book 'how the other half lives,'"[114] alluding to Jacob Riis's popular 1890 exposé

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[111] Bryant, *Picturesque America*, Vol. 1, iv.

[112] Hartmann, "A Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York," 92-97.

[113] Sydney Allan [Sadakichi Hartman], "Picturesque New York in Four Papers: The Esthetic Side of Jewtown," *Camera Notes* 6, No. 3 (October 1902): 146.

[114] Hartmann, "A Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York," 94.

of tenement conditions aimed at catalyzing the improvement public health and safety.[115] The realism of Riis's contrasty photographs was shocking to New York's middle class.[116] The photographs showed the lawlessness and filth of tenement life by picturing entire families living and working in one-room apartments, children huddled together asleep on fire escapes, and criminals congregating in alleyways.[117] Hartmann however suggests that picturesque renderings of tenement life are more informative than investigative journalism. Riis had perhaps gone too far into the roughness of Lower Manhattan's depths for Hartmann's tastes, missing the eternal truths that could be gleaned from its visual appeal. Hartmann implied that the picturesque photographer could do a better job at educating the public about tenement life by focusing on the surface qualities of irregularity and decay such as the laundry lines and deteriorating buildings that likened New York's slums to Rafaëlli's Paris and rendered its "filthy" immigrant inhabitants as pleasing premodern peasant types. Such scenes not only made the slums palatable rather than distressing to middle-class audiences, but suggested that the "real" timeless truths of the picturesque were more "true" because they educated the public to see New York City as fitting within a timeless social order. They thus served a more principled purpose for Hartmann than the sharply and haphazardly rendered "plagiarism" of contemporary reality exposed by muckraking photojournalism.

Along with the choice of appropriate scenes, in order to make picturesque slumming photographs that were distinct from Riis's, skillful control of the camera's

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[115] Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890).

[116] Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 170-171.

[117] Riis, *How the Other Half Lives.*

mechanical reproduction of visible facts was required. Readers of *Camera Notes* were instructed to use soft focus and simplified composition to suppress the details of modern reality in articles and photographic examples.[118] In the article directly preceding Hartmann's in *Camera Notes*, Stieglitz published A. Horsley Hinton's "Naturalism in Photography" (1900), which took Emerson's 1890 philosophy of Naturalistic Focus to task for upholding scientific notions of physiological vision at the expense of artistic truths. According to Hinton, the "representation of nature as the eye sees it" was besides the point of art. The merit of an artwork was judged instead on "the stirring of feelings and emotions" in depicting the "joyousness, the grandeur, the sadness of the landscape" that has "no actual [visible] existence" without the "contribution of human temperament." By abandoning the necessity to produce optically-accurate photographs, Hinton notes that the photographer "may control the lens-made drawing to an almost unlimited degree."[119] The want for emotional truths made permissible a departure from scientific vision and opened up a new range of possibilities for manipulating images.

Following on the heels of Hinton's summons to stir emotions, Hartmann suggested the hand camera's utility for such purposes. His example of Rafaëlli running in the streets making snapshots of the slums recalled the picturesque practice of sketching. The sketch was a prized aesthetic object of picturesque painters. Just as crumbling overgrown ruins were regarded as a formal perfection that occurred *after* idealized manmade objects had succumbed to nature, the sketch was regarded as a having a formal perfection that *preceded* man's idealized artistic depiction of nature. The sketch harbored the drama of the tension between "resistant materials" of nature and the idealizing vision

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[118] Peterson, *Alfred Stieglitz's* Camera Notes, 19-20.

[119] A. Horsley Hinton, "Naturalism in Photography," *Camera Notes* 4, no. 2 (October 1900): 83-91.

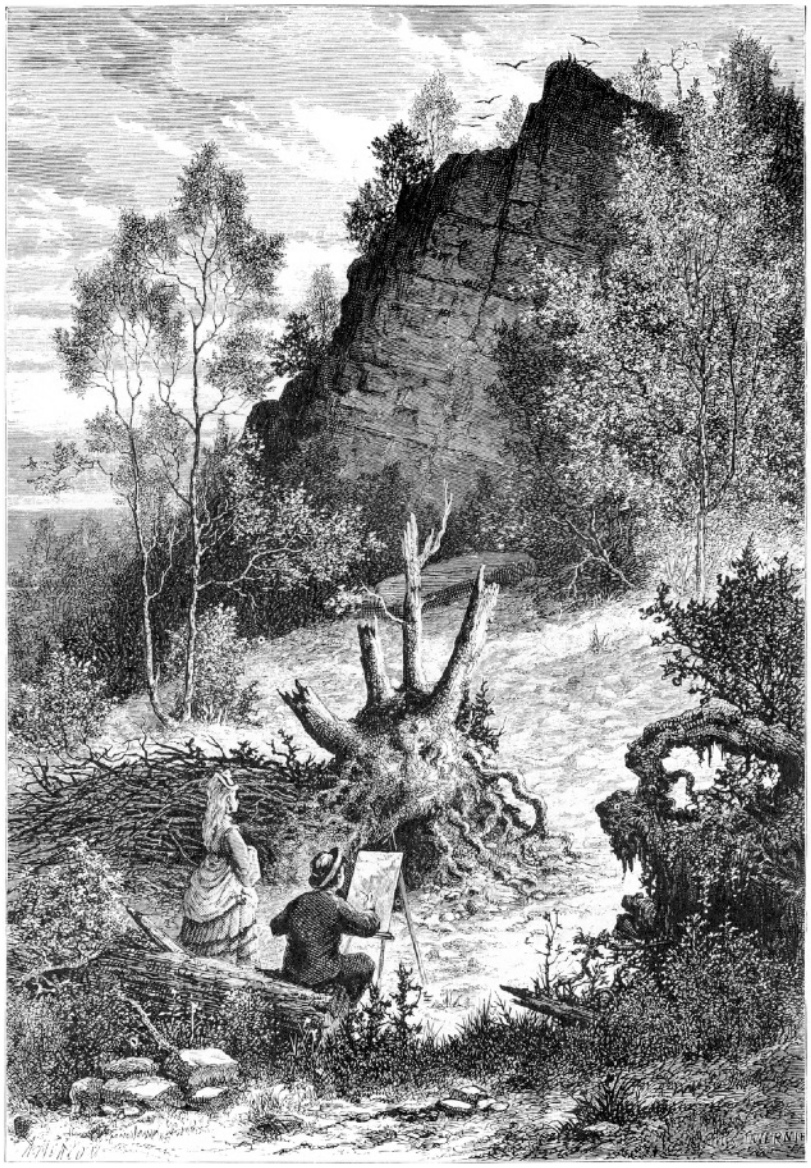


Figure 36. *Eagle Rock, Orange,* by Jules Tavernier, 1874.

of the artist.[120] The sketch reflected a moment of unsettling direct contact between the artist and the reality before him. This meeting of the unruly real with the manmade ideal embodied what picturesque artists valued as the energy of charged contact between contrasting entities, such as the meeting of still and rapid water, the effects of weather upon a building, or the growth of weeds over artificial objects. The engravings of *Picturesque America* often depicted middle-class subjects in the act of sketching. Jules Tavernier's, *Eagle Rock, Orange* (figure 36, 1874) shows a young opposite-sex pair situated within a particularly unruly environment. The man sketches, while the woman looks out at the scene before them. Directly in front of them are four broken tree limbs that jut irregularly from a tangle of roots and a haphazard pile of branches. The ugliness of the tree snags at the exact center of the composition emphasizes the resistant material of nature that the young man wrestles onto the paper. Embedded within the overgrowth that everywhere encroaches upon the couple, Tavernier indicates the charged encounter with nature involved in the act of picturesque sketching. While the paper and pencil mediate the struggle between the civilized and the wild, they are but small delicate tools that only barely keep at bay the possibility of total envelopment. The snapshot functioned this way during Hartmann and Rafaëlli's slumming expedition. The excited artist "like a ferret ran from one side [of the street] to the other to take a number of snapshots."[121] Here the painter's snapshots were understood to be the equivalent of sketches; suddenly overcome by his contact with the scene before him, Raffaëlli excitedly picked up his camera to quickly record the unruly world of the slums, making images that

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[120] Martin Price, "The Picturesque Moment," in *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle*, edited by Harold Bloom and Frederick W. Hilles (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

[121] Hartmann, "A Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York," 94.

would later become idealized paintings in the studio. The picturesque slum snapshot was thus conceptualized as the thin intermediary in a charged encounter between the bourgeois male photographer and the unruly reality of Lower Manhattan.

The snapshot notably no longer served as a metaphor for the mechanical "plagiarizing" of the masses. Hartmann turned the snapshot into a sketch-like intermediary in the spirited contact between photographer and subject. This notion of the snapshot was also distinct from the photographs Stieglitz described in 1897 as those made "by the yard" and by "chance" by "button pressers."[122] In his 1897 article Stieglitz had proposed that making art with a handheld camera required overcoming its technological limitations by forgoing the manufacturer's instructions, practicing patience, and utilizing specialized technical knowledge. However by 1902 Hartmann would suggest that such button-pressing was in fact a critical technique for picturesque photography in the slums: "You never need to wait for a composition. The crowd takes care of that. You only need to look into your finder and let the restless stream of humanity pass by" to produce "instantaneous fragments of life."[123] Such statements sharply deviated from the techniques recommended by Emerson in *Naturalistic Photography.*

While this marked an evolution in the technological distinction between art and vernacular photography, intention to derive aesthetic pleasure from scenes of racial purity remained intact. Like Emerson, Hartmann encouraged photographers to portray working-class people as timeless premodern types. Hartmann's "Picturesque New York in Four Papers: The Esthetic Side of Jewtown" (1902) essay in *Camera Notes* was the first of

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[122] Stieglitz, "The Hand Camera," 20.

[123] Hartman, "The Esthetic Side of Jewtown," 143-148.

an unrealized instructional series on making picturesque photographs. Echoing *Picturesque America*'s serial tours of locales, the set of papers presumably planned to survey a selection of distinct ethnic enclaves in Lower Manhattan beginning with the Jewish quarter in the Sixth Ward. The text again read as a picturesque slumming expedition, framing the Jewish neighborhood as an exotic place temporally and spatially removed from middle-class New York: "What strange part of the city have we strayed to?" Hartmann openned the article. "Are we really in New York, at the beginning of the twentieth century, or have we suddenly been conveyed to some European town of the medieval times?" He goes on to describe a "nightmare" of a neighborhood whose most repulsive qualities make it a choice site for the artist photographer:

> "The Hebrew quarter is undoubtedly the most *picturesque* part of New York, *i.e.*, the one which lends itself most easily to artistic interpretation. It overflows with suggestions. Its very dinginess and squalor render it interesting. For filth—as disagreeable as it is—is the great harmonizer in the pictorial arts, the wizard who can render every scene and object—even the humblest one—picturesque."[124]

On the one hand Hartmann seems to frame the Jewish neighborhood as an overseas ancient place far removed from modern New York. However its filth is "the great harmonizer" that not only makes the neighborhood visually appealing, but picturesque—unifying it with the disparate parts of the nation in a timeless order. For Hartmann, the Sixth Ward's imagined temporal and spatial distance from America makes it the "most picturesque" part of the city. By photographing the unfamiliar customs of its inhabitants —"an army of peddlers" who sell damaged goods to women with strange head coverings

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[124] Hartman, "The Esthetic Side of Jewtown," 145.

who "haggle about the fraction of a cent"—artists might educate Americans in the appreciation of "newly explored" and untouched Old World realities within the nation.[125] Picturesque photography produces an American usable past by making visible that the United States contains, not only ancient wilderness, but also timeworn cities replete with populations of medieval races seemingly unaware of modernity. That Jews were a disparaged racial type rather than an esteemed one necessitates the techniques of the picturesque to "tear" art from nature rather than the careful techniques of naturalistic photography. While Hartmann's pursuit of intact premodern types is reminiscent of Stieglitz's earlier trips to Gutach and Katwijk, Emerson's careful techniques would be out of place in the bustle of the Sixth Ward. In contrast, the picturesque's quick snapping from the "stream of humanity" passing by simply aims the camera at the slum's filth, which, like a "wizard," mysteriously neutralizes the disagreeableness of the neighborhood and renders it as art.

Stieglitz's status as an assimilated Jew made him sympathetic to Hartmann's perspective, believing himself to be entirely unlike Jews who lived in the tenements. Stieglitz's childhood in a brownstone just east of Central Park was entirely different from those of later Jewish immigrants who settled in the tenements. As a youngster he idolized American Revolutionary war heroes, vacationed at Lake George, and attended a private boys' school that trained all of its pupils, regardless of their family's religion, to be "well-bred, high-minded, Christian boys and young men."[126] Stieglitz's family assimilated into middle-class white American culture, maintaining only a limited allegiance to their home

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[125] Hartman, "The Esthetic Side of Jewtown," 144; Bryant, *Picturesque America*, vol. 1, iv.

[126] Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 3-64.

country—one of the important tenets separating settlers from outsiders within the nation.[127]

The more recent waves of immigrants who lived in the tenement district were however seen as belonging to a different class of immigrants than those who arrived during the mid-nineteenth century. Earlier immigrants spread out from the Northeast westward, assimilating into cities and towns across the country. The large waves of immigrants who arrived to the United States tended to stay in tight-knit communities within larger cities and maintain more of their ethnic lifestyles and identities.[128] The recent Jewish emigres were also more likely to be Eastern Europeans who were judged to be unassimilable and racially distinct from the German Jews who had settled decades earlier. Unlike German Jews who came in smaller numbers and had adapted to American modernity, Eastern European Jews were seen as stuck in a foreign time and place. They were characterized as "chained to the past," overly attached to their ethnic and religious traditions, and sticking together as a "brooding mass" in lower Manhattan as if it were their American Jerusalem.[129]

By incorporating Jews into the picturesque scenes of the nation, Hartmann did not propose embracing recent immigrants as Americans, but proposed exploiting their unassimilable foreignness as a means to legitimize the nation as "almost the same as but not quite" like Europe. Such a view served to unify white middle-class Americans as the "native" Americans whose viewership could behold the disparate picturesque sites of the nation as their national heritage. Citizens like Hartmann and Stieglitz—who were

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[127] Johnston and Lawson, "Settler Colonies," 362-363.

[128] Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 277.

[129] Stiener, *On the Trail of the Immigrant*, 142-151.

assimilated into elite American society yet were not considered as white as many of their peers—had much to gain from being included in such a community of viewers of the picturesque. Hartmann's picturesque New York thus naturalized the paradoxes of settler visual culture with the unifying visual logic of the snapshot "torn" from the real. On the one hand, picturesque New York confirmed settlers' belonging together in a singular "native" national culture *distinct* from Europe. On the other hand, this legitimacy was achieved by an imagined *resemblance* to Europe. Accordingly Eastern European immigrants were pictured as the unassimilable Other to Americans who had arrived "first." However, Jewtown's imagined antiquity would have dated "native" Americans' "prior" arrival as one set impossibly long ago in an ambiguous yesteryear. Usable pasts tend to have such paradoxical qualities, for they are necessarily skewed versions of history aimed at assuaging settler anxieties rather than the conveyance of facts.[130] Usable pasts were therefore the "eternal truths" of American art photography that both transcended the dirty business of facts, but also relied upon the camera's apparent relationship to the real.

Even though Hartmann textually framed the Sixth Ward as a place where one might simply aim the camera and easily snap picturesque photographs, Stieglitz's photographs of the neighborhood demonstrate that "Jewtown" posed problems for the racialized vision of the settler. Stieglitz had photographed in the Sixth Ward during the same winter that he made *Winter—Fifth Avenue*. While some of these photographs are now prominent elements of his oeuvre, they were not printed or exhibited until after the

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130 Heike Paul, *The Myths That Made America: An Introduction to American Studies* (Bielefeld, Germany: Transcript, 2014), 12.


Figure 37. *Five Points, New York*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1893.

1920s. Photographs like *Five Points, New York* (figure 37, 1893) demonstrate Stieglitz's unsuccessful attempts to frame residents of the Sixth Ward as racial types. *Five Points* depicts a winter scene in which people crowd around a shop advertising the "cheapest" clothing for sale in the city. With the name of its Jewish owner prominently displayed on the sign, the store was one of many Jewish-owned clothing shops on Baxter Street. Riis described Baxter Street as signaling the beginning of the corridor to Jewtown.[131] The title of the photograph references both the name of the clothing shop, but also the Five Points neighborhood, which was named for the five-way intersection at which the photograph was taken—the confluence of Baxter, Cross, and Anthony Streets—only one block to the east of the Photochrome Engraving Company that Stieglitz and his friends ran briefly from 1891 to 1895.[132] The neighborhood, long notorious for disease and crime, had recently played a central role in Riis's exposé *How the Other Half Lives*. Within the Five Points neighborhood, Riis describes Jews encroaching upon the Italians who lived on Mulberry Street (the street that recedes into the distance at the right of Stieglitz's photograph).[133]

By photographing the large "Five Points" sign Stieglitz signals that his photograph stands for the slum itself, with the foreign races, filth, and vice that contemporary viewers would have conjured upon thinking of the neighborhood. The photograph would not have conformed to either the standards of naturalistic nor picturesque photography as they were laid out by Emerson and Hartmann. Most passersby have their backs to the camera, not availing their phenotypical traits to be

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[131] Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, 104.

[132] Whelan, *Stieglitz,* 104-105, 138-139.

[133] Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, 25-27.

"read" racially. They form a nearly homogenous mass of winter coats and hats stretching across the length of the photograph. This horizon of cloaked bodies would have been legible to Stieglitz's middle-class audience through the neighborhood's persistent reputation as the most crowded in the city.[134] Such a meaning would have related the image more to social reform photography than to the bourgeois desire for premodern racial types.

It is not clear whether the photograph pictures the modern or premodern era. Stieglitz's original title for the lantern slide he made of the image was "A New Importation," signaling that he initially imagined viewers would understand his subjects as a crowd flocking to the Jewish store after the arrival of a shipment of overseas goods. This insinuated urban immigrants' relationship to quickening overseas global travel and urban immigrants that participated in a global economy. Gathering en masse around a clothing store, they are not engaging in traditional labor, but modern consumerism. A viewer would have a difficult time perceiving these subjects as ancient races living as they had in prior centuries.

In addition Stieglitz did not demonstrate adept "slumming," in which experienced middle-class sightseers would attempt to mingle stealthily among the working class so they might experience firsthand the bustle and stench and even enter into opium dens.[135] Rather than joining the "restless stream of humanity," Stieglitz stands a considerable distance from the people walking along Anthony Street. Furthermore, he

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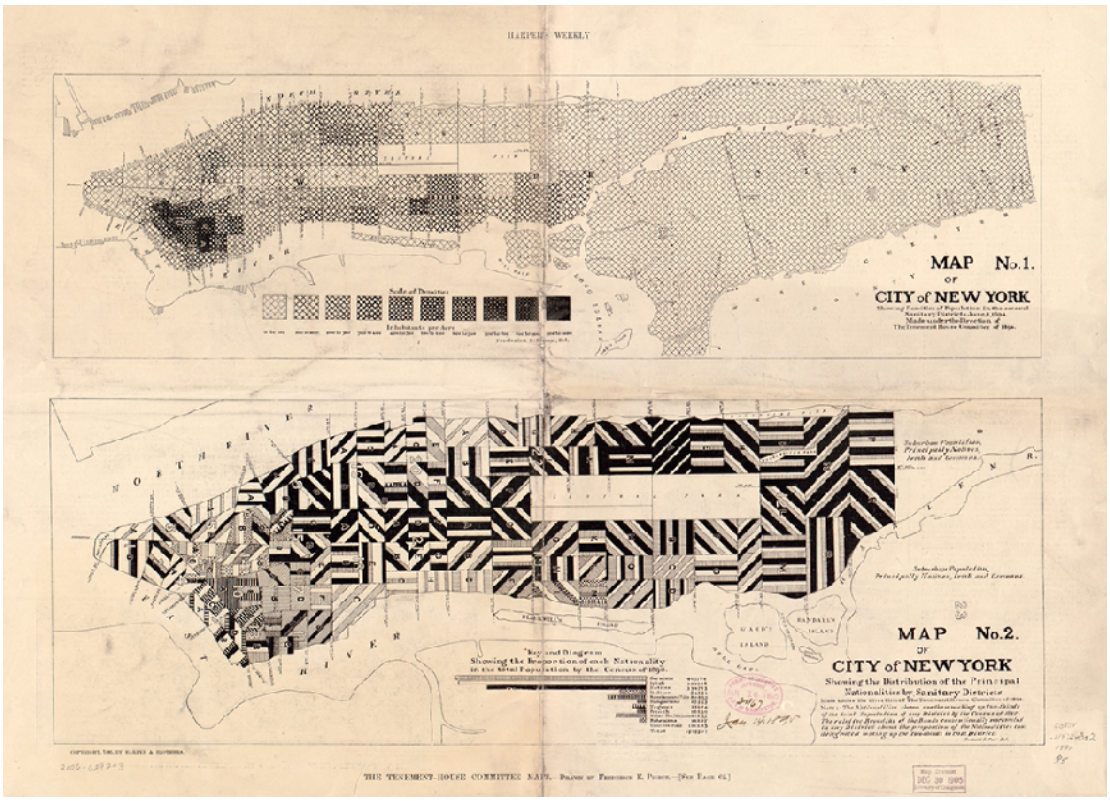
[134] The Tenement-House Committee maps, Harper & Brothers, 1895; After the Civil War nearly a quarter of Five Points residents left the neighborhood for better housing due to rising incomes for manual laborers after the war. The Lower East Side became the most populated neighborhood in Manhattan. In the 1880s new waves of immigrants moved to both neighborhoods, but the Lower East Side remained the most populated neighborhood in the city. Anbinder, *Five Points*, 344-346.

[135] "Slumming in this Town," 4.



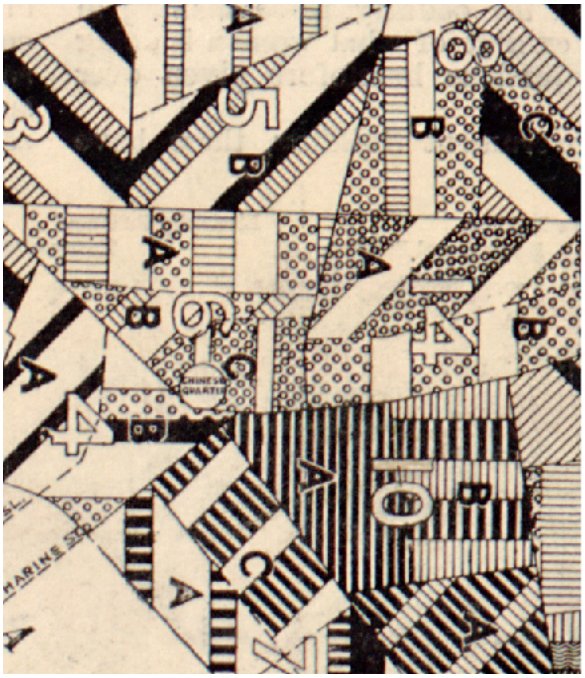



Figure 38. "Map of City of New York" (and detail of Five Points neighborhood), by the Tenement House Committee, 1895.

has stopped to take a picture too soon, hovering at the entrance to the Sixth Ward rather than venturing off the beaten track as Hartmann would have preferred. The laundry lines and "truck" that so excited Rafaëlli are visible at the distant edges of the photograph, beckoning the picturesque artist to search out more layers of filth and poverty. Stieglitz's image contradicts Hartmann's claim that one can simply aim the camera and take any number of picturesque photographs in Jewtown.

While this was partially due to Stieglitz's inept slumming, it was also due to the racial make-up of the neighborhood, which was far more complicated than Hartmann claimed. By the 1880s the neighborhood had gained a reputation for being the most diverse neighborhood in the city. Once known for its large population of Irish immigrants and African Americans, by 1878 a Five Points tenement on Baxter Street was described in the *Herald* as "a veritable tower of Babel," with "a different language at every door."[136] Riis described the Sixth Ward as having "more colors than any rainbow." However, he also painstakingly delineated which races lived, shopped, and worshipped upon which streets, reflecting the the perception of immigrants as unassimilable because they maintained their cultural identities by "carrying their slums with them wherever they go," transporting their home countries intact onto American shores.[137] Mapping and census collecting of the era reflected the period's intense preoccupation with the racial make up of the nation, attempting to carefully keep track of the locations and migrations of different immigrant groups. An 1895 map of Manhattan (figure 38) makes evident what Riis had called "an extraordinary crazy-quilt" of the racial make up of the

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[136] Tyler Anbinder, *Five Points: The 19th-Century New York City Neighborhood That Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum*, 344; Blacks were emancipated in New York in 1827; *Herald* (New York), November 30, 1878, quoted in Anbinder, *Five Points*, 344.

[137] Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, 21-27.

neighborhood—the result of attempts to make clear the national origins of Lower Manhattan's residents. Most of the city (including Stieglitz's own neighborhood) displayed a fairly steady mix of Irish, German, and "Native" (white settler) inhabitants. However Lower Manhattan was a heterogenous jumble of Italians, Russian and Polish Jews, Irish, German, Chinese, African American, Hungarian, French, and Czech residents.[138] The perception that "Jewtown" was a racially homogenous enclave of the premodern era was thus the result of a significant effort to read racially-mixed "facts" according to essentialized "truths." Stieglitz's photograph avoids picturing such facts, by maintaining a safe distance from his subjects.

Because Hartmann's four-part series on picturesque Lower Manhattan was unrealized, the other neighborhoods he intended to explore remain unknown. However his choice to begin with "Jewtown" implies that subsequent essays would have carved the area into equivalently distinct ethnic enclaves, directing photographers to turn a blind eye to race mixing and modernity. His prescriptions for making Lower Manhattan suited to the picturesque represent the significant effort required to make the city fit aesthetic ideals. If the initial adoption of the hand camera became permissible once it could be shown to communicate racial values, the picturesque snapshot represented a similar stepping stone. It was a photograph that did not hide its handheld nature, but instead used that character to emphasize more forcefully the accuracy of the settlement's self-image. The handheld camera allowed the photographer to push past the new and touristy areas of the slums to find evermore "authentic" views of the "ancient" races and neighborhoods of the city. The first artistic "snapshot aesthetic" was a mode for molding time, space, and race to settler aesthetic ideals.

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[138] The Tenement-House Committee maps, Harper & Brothers, 1895.

Figure 39. *The Street, Fifth Avenue*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1900/1901.

## Picturesque Slumming on the Kaiser Wilhelm II

Though Stieglitz made few photographs during the first decade of the twentieth century, he did begin to take more seriously his photographs of New York city after Hartmann's "Jewtown" essay appeared, working on an unrealized series of fifty urban scenes—perhaps wishing to benefit from Hartmann's suggestion that the first photographer who made picturesque photographs of the city would be remembered forever as a photographic pioneer.[139] Typically understood as attempts to incorporate Japanese-style compositions popular with other Secession photographers, many of Stieglitz's New York photographs departed from Emerson's scientific optics in favor of flattened vertical compositions. While images like *The Street, Fifth Avenue* (figure 39, 1900/1901), *Spring Showers, New York* (figure 40, 1900/1901), and *The Flat-iron* (figure 41, 1903), certainly appear to relate to Japanese styles that were in vogue with pictorialists, they also show a distinct relationship to the verticality of picturesque compositions. Because the modernity of American cities posed a particular challenge for picturesque aesthetics, the vertical compositions used in landscapes to highlight the immensity of the American wilderness (see for example *Under the Catskill Falls,* figure 34) was adapted to urban scenes in order to curtail the artificiality of urban structures by shrouding the height of tall buildings in trees. Engravings of New York and Philadelphia

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139 Dorothy Norman, "Alfred Stieglitz: Six Happenings" *Twice a Year* 14-15: 188-189; Hartmann, "Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York," 97; Stieglitz also took up others of Hartmann's suggestions that appear in this essay, such as photographing excavated building sites and the skeletal forms of unfinished skyscrapers. See chapter two.

scenes in *Picturesque America* exhibit this strategy. In *Tower and Steeple, Independence Hall* (figure 42, 1874) and *Trinity-Church Tower* (figure 43, 1874) trees in the foreground frame and partially obscure the view of the buildings. Though these buildings are the named subjects of the engravings, they can only be "picturesque" subjects if their uniformity is mostly obscured by the irregularity of untidy trees. *Tower and Steeple* employs forked trees to cut through manmade forms. Like the unwieldy nature in *Eagle Rock*, these forked trees represent a charged encounter between the civilized and the wild. This same strategy appears in Stieglitz's *The Flat-iron.* A forked tree, characteristic of the unwieldy nature treasured by picturesque artists, cuts through the Flatiron Building's corner. Like picturesque, Stieglitz composed the image to ensure that branches in the foreground appear to touch the building on all four sides, diminishing the shock of the unprecedentedly tall steel-sculpted building. Though the Flatiron Building had been completed only the year before, Stieglitz's picturesque strategies harmonized the building with a timeless order of organic life.

The stark modernity of cities was also dampened by the inclusion of working-class subjects performing traditional manual labor who confirmed the preservation of a premodern social order. In *Trinity-Church* a working-class subject focused intently upon tending to the cemetery in the foreground assures the viewer that New York's laborers live content and simple lives. The municipal worker in Stieglitz's *Spring Showers* both mirrors a worker who appears in *Trinity-Church* and also harkens to his earlier types, such as *Winter—Fifth Avenue*. Unlike middle-class subjects who appear miniaturized by vertical picturesque compositions as viewers in awe of their heritage, the immense scenery highlights the humbleness of laborers. The small act of raking is akin to the mending of fishing nets—a tiny and tedious activity done in the service to one's society; a job that

Figure 40. (left) *Spring Showers, New York*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1900/1901.

Figure 41. (right) *The Flat-iron*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1903.

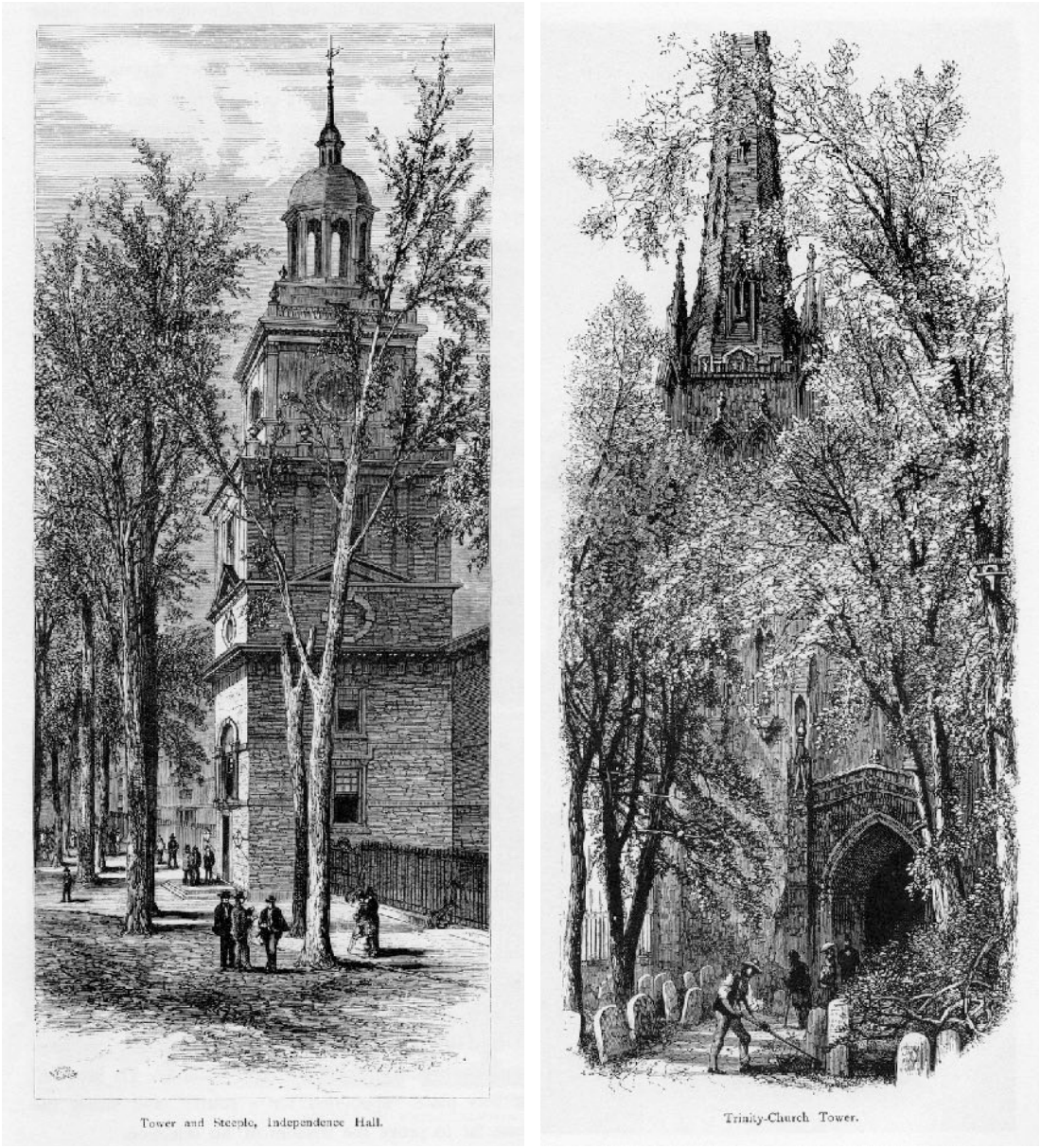


Figure 42. (left) *Tower and Steeple, Independence Hall*, by Granville Perkins, 1874.

Figure 43. (right) *Trinity-Church Tower*, by Harry Fenn, 1874.

will never be completed. These solitary working-class subjects, through their humble laboring, thus become sentimentally merged with the environment's eternity.

Following Stieglitz's return from Europe in 1907, he began to refer to photographs that exhibited such picturesque strategies as "snapshots," indicating the increasing importance of the idea during the time that he made the proto-*Steerage.* Related compositions appeared in the series of photographs Stieglitz published in *Camera Work* upon his return from Europe: *Snapshot—From my Window, Berlin* (figure 44, 1902), *Snapshot—From my Window, New York* (figure 45, 1903), and *Snapshot—In the New York Central Yards* (figure 46, 1904). While he had published and exhibited each of the images previously, he added "snapshot" to title for each for the October 1907 issue of *Camera Work*.[140] Stieglitz's "snapshots" appeared with a mocking article about Käsebier written by Charles Caffin, which portrayed her work as reliant upon tricks and sentimental pretense, while also motivated by vanity and gluttony. While Käsebier had once been the pride of the Photo-Secession, Stieglitz perceived her recent enlistment in the Professional Photographers of New York in as a calculated challenge to the anti-commercial ideals of the Photo-Secession. Stieglitz meant his own work to stand as an example of artwork that was unpretentious, honest, and unmotivated by monetary compensation. Their emotionality was to be one of the immediacy of a snapshot rather

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[140] In *Camera Work*, he listed their dates as 1907, but Greenough correctly identifies the dates as *Snapshot — From my Window, New York* (1902), *Snapshot — In the New York Central Yards* (1903), and a *Snapshot — From my Window, Berlin* (1904). Greenough, *The Key Set*, 168-179; One exception to this renaming appeared in Charles Holmes' ed., *Color Photography and Other Recent Developments in the Art of the Camera* (London, 1908), in which Stieglitz titled one of the images *In the New York Central Yards —Snapshot*; Since he often used a hand camera for other images, it was not merely the fact of the hand camera that caused him to title the photographs as such.

Figure 44. *Snapshot—From My Window, Berlin*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1904.

Figure 45. *Snapshot—From My Window, New York* (right), by Alfred Stieglitz, 1902.

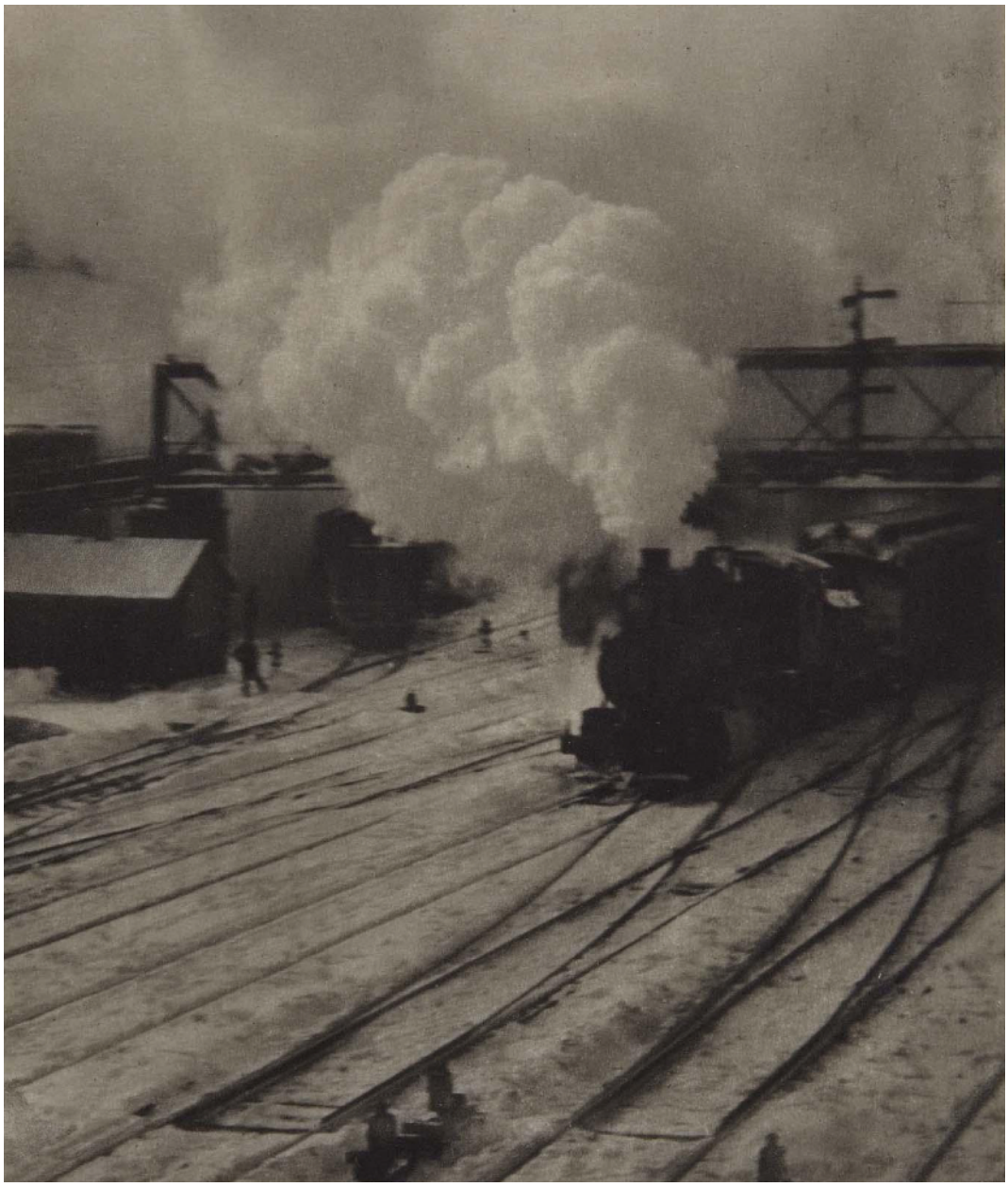

Figure 46. *Snapshot—In the New York Central Yards*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1903.

Figure 47. *The Hand of Man*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1902.

than the affectation of poses and gum bichromate alteration.[141] Echoing the snapshot's "tear" from nature, Stieglitz stated of his own images, by contrast, that they were "snapshots, nothing more, nothing less."[142] In other words, for Stieglitz the invocation of the snapshot signaled a picturesque aesthetic strategy that at once denoted honesty and also marked a drive for power.

Each of Stieglitz's "snapshots" demonstrate the importance he placed on picturesque vertical perspectives that diverged from the vanishing perspectival lines of his earlier work. *The Hand of Man* (figure 47, 1902) and *Snapshot — In the New York Central Yards* were taken of a similar subjects around the same time. Both images show a train arriving in a train yard with a complex network of intersecting tracks. One plausible reason for the "snapshot" designation could be the shutter speed: The blur of smoke in *The Hand of Man* indicates that it was taken with a somewhat slower shutter speed than *Central Yards*. However a more striking difference stems from the compositions. *The Hand of Man* displays a clearly isolated subject compositionally emphasized by the perspectival lines receding into the image. In contrast, the subject of *Central Yards* is less clearly delineated. The camera looks down at the train yard from the 48th Street foot bridge above it.[143] This perspective creates a disembodied point of view, compressing the three-dimensional space of the train yard into two dimensions that unfold vertically across the picture plane. Unlike the lines gradually receding toward the horizon in *Hand*

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[141] Gum-bichromate prints were produced by brushing gum arabic solution mixed with potassium bichromate and pigment onto drawing paper. During development the photographer can manipulate the print with a brush, sponge, or water, producing painterly effects. Such manipulations caused the process Stieglitz and Emerson and their followers to disparage the process, until Käsebier gained recognition at the 1899 salon in Philadelphia. William Innes Homer, Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1983), 68, 168; Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz,* 131, 157-158.

[142] "Our Illustrations," *Camera Work* 20, October 1907, 46.

[143] Greenough, *The Key Set,* 169.

*of Man,* the lines in *Central Yards* are diagonal across the image. The horizon is obscured by the smoke that seems to mingle with clouds, giving the entire plane of the image a shallow depth. Similar compositional strategies can be found in each of the other "snapshots." Each surveys a scene from a high angle perched upon the structures of modernity—tall buildings and bridges. Their lines do not lead the viewer's eye into a receding perspective, but instead zig and zag across the image plane. Like with picturesque engravings of American landscapes, the verticality of the "snapshots" unifies disparate scenes and suggests an unidealized honesty.

This strategy also serves to eliminate the single idealized subject of the photograph in favor of dispersing attention across the picture plane. In order to make *Snapshot—From my Window, New York* from his earlier *From my Window, New York* (figure 48, 1902), Stieglitz changed the cropping of the image to shift the emphasis of the image. For the initial non-snapshot version, he cropped the left side of the image so that the fence and building at the left of the frame became less prominent in the composition, balancing the visual weight of the composition with the perspectival lines of the carriage tracks in the snow. While the umbrellaed figures and hansom cab share the viewer's attention, the receding parallel lines of the street unify the thrust of their movement, which itself becomes the subject of the photograph—the peaceful harmony of New York's middle class on a winter day. For *Snapshot*, Stieglitz disrupted the harmony of the composition by eliminating the row of buildings and the hansom cab, and truncating the carriage tracks in the snow. Without the elements that had served to draw the viewer's eye easily along the receding perspective of the image, the perspective is cut short. By cropping the right side of the image this time, he also caused the right side of the image to dissolve into the diffusion of snowfall with no clear horizon or vanishing

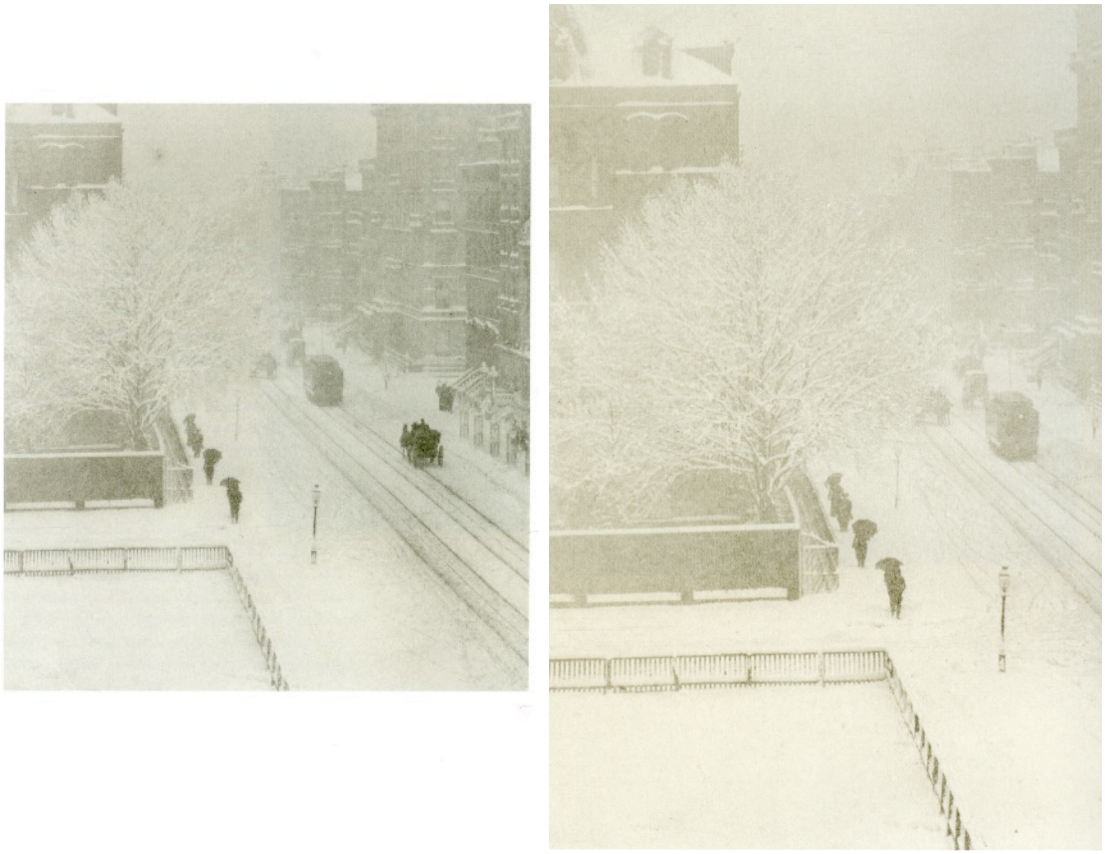

Figure 48. Comparison of *From My Window, New York* (left) and *Snapshot—From My Window, New York* (right), by Alfred Stieglitz, 1902.

point. By also including more of the angular forms of the fence and building on the left, he caused those forms to rise in prominence and take on a geometric quality, competing with the umbrellaed human figures for attention as the subject of the image. Thus in both *Central Yards* and *From my Window*, Stieglitz eliminated the visual through line in each of the "snapshots," causing them to have a less discernible single subject. Without a clear sense of perspective to guide the eye through the image, the prominent shapes and figures are not clearly ordered in importance. This clear departure from the visual principles outlined in early issues of *Camera Notes* represented Stieglitz's shift toward the honesty of the picturesque and away from the idealization of his earlier work.[144] With this nonhierarchical arrangement of subjects across a disjointed picture plane Stieglitz inaugurated a small step toward a more modernist conception of photographic vision.

This was a modern vision enabled by the urban structures of modernity, the quickness of the handheld camera, the ever quickening movement of people in the city, and the constant growth of buildings and industry. Departing from Emerson's traditional compositions, Stieglitz followed Hartmann's guidance to pioneer new territory in photography by rendering Manhattan picturesque. His snapshot experiments were equivalent to picturesque sketches—neither overtly idealized nor entirely disjointed and nonhierarchical. The overwhelming effects of wet weather, fog, and snow harmonized new subject matter with the eternal rhythm of the seasons. His "snapshots" represented a charged moment of contact between the manmade and nature, as much as between the photographer and the scene before him. Thus they portrayed both the timelessness of the

144 John W. M'Kecknie, "Linear Perspective and the Camera," *Camera Notes* 1, no. 2 (October 1897), 41-51.

picturesque city and also the honesty of the photographer himself, which he sought to contrast to Käsebier's heavy hand.

The same compositional strategies appear in *The Steerage*: the perspective unfolds vertically across the picture plane, compressed into two dimensions; the lines of the image zig and zag diagonally across the image instead of creating a sense of receding perspective; multiple subjects compete for prominence in the image without clear indications of their hierarchy. His camera looks down at the steerage passengers from the first-class deck of the ocean liner. As with his "snapshots," this gives the impression that the camera is hovering from a disembodied perspective that has no imaginable path of entry into the image. The image is divided vertically by the bold form of the gangplank that reflects more sunlight than any other object and seems to float in the image as if ruled by a different physical logic than the other elements. There is no horizon or vanishing point. The foreground and background are separated from one another vertically in the picture plane, instead of receding smoothly into the distance as they might in a landscape image. Human figures populate the entire picture plane, punctuated by the bright round form of a sunlit straw hat worn by a man on the upper deck looking down at the lower deck. Occupied by the act of looking, he functions as a stand-in for the viewer, or for Stieglitz himself. Behind him the figures on the upper deck become undifferentiated due to their close proximity to each other. The figures furthest from the camera are abstracted as blurry silhouettes standing out against the bright sky. The lower deck is occupied mostly by women and children who spread out in an intimate domestic scene of maternal bonds and drying laundry. There is no clear narrative relationship between the various figures in the image. Even more than the images he would call

"snapshots" months later, *The Steerage* displays an audacious move away from idealized compositions.

Stieglitz's later narrative regarding the image—though certainly fabricated—indicates that Hartmann's conception of the picturesque snapshot structured the scene. He would later recall the moments before making *The Steerage* as a bold venture away from the passengers in first class who he alone discovered in all of their bare humanity. He described himself excitedly running to his cabin to get his camera and returning to photograph the scene quickly before it changed.[145] Whether or not he actually ran in such a manner, the tale suggests that in Stieglitz's imagination, the experience of photographing *The Steerage* was on some level shaped by Hartmann's "slumming expedition" narrative. Stieglitz described himself as an artist excitedly snapshooting picturesque sketches just as Raffaëlli had done in the Manhattan slums. In reality, ogling at steerage passengers was a very different kind of slumming. He had a conspicuous and protected enough position on the first-class deck of the ocean liner to candidly capture working-class subjects from an opportune vantage point, to overcome the hesitancy demonstrated in his earlier slumming shots. Often described as a hypochondriac, Stieglitz would have resonated with writer Edward A. Steiner's statement, "[The] practice of looking down into the steerage holds all the pleasures of a slumming expedition with none of its hazards of contamination."[146] Steiner, a Hungarian Jewish immigrant who traveled frequently to document immigrant life and steerage conditions, described the popular activity of first-class passengers who gathered at the railing to watch steerage passengers, "look[ing] down upon them with pity and dismay, getting some sport from

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[145] "How *The Steerage* Happened," 128-129.

[146] Edward A. Steiner, *On the Trail of the Immigrant* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906), 41; On Stieglitz's hypochondria, see Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz,* 53.

throwing sweetmeats and pennies among the hopeless looking mass."[147] Stieglitz was therefore likely one of many first-class passengers enjoying the view of the passengers below. Regardless, the architecture of the ship allowed him to, at last, obtain the easy shots Hartmann claimed were plentiful on slumming expeditions.

It would seem initially that things had gone right with *The Steerage.* Its compositional elements clearly relate the photograph to the "snapshots" he published shortly after; the immigrant subjects seem to meet Hartmann's call for picturesque renderings of New York's foreigners. However, Stieglitz did not choose to publish *The Steerage* alongside his other "snapshots." In fact, the image would not appear in *Camera Work* for another four years. There are several reasons that the image was likely a failure in Stieglitz's eyes when he initially developed it. The fact that all later prints and publications of the image would include a black frame around it—something that is not repeated in any other Stieglitz photograph—indicates that the composition needed to be uncommonly contained. This is likely due, at least in part, to the bright sky at the upper right edge of the image and the brightness of the gangplank that bisects the left edge of the image. Without a black frame and the apparent heavy burning-in of the upper edge, the sky would be indistinguishable from the paper upon which the photograph was printed and would make the image seem as though it ended at the mast above the passenger's heads.[148] It would thus appear as if it were a misshapen non-square photograph. Similarly, the white gangplank would also be indistinguishable from the

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147 Edward A. Steiner, *On the Trail of the Immigrant* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906), 41; See also Edward A. Steiner, *From Alien to Citizen: The Story of My Life in America* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1914).

148 Burning in is a darkroom technique in which more light is applied to part of a photograph in order to darken it. The sky in the upper right edge shows signs of especially heavy burning because, not only is it darker than the area of sky (also likely burned in) that appears below the mast, but because it is very grainy—an artifact of considerable burning.

paper's tone, causing it to uncomfortably tear into the image plane. These technical problems would have been concerning to Stieglitz, who had been trained to pay meticulous attention to maintaining detail in both the brightest highlights and deepest shadows of every photograph.

The brightness of the gangplank and sky make apparent that Stieglitz had to make some tough decisions when exposing the image. Likely the scene that appeared before him was availed by the sun coming out after days of cold weather. While Stieglitz certainly preferred to make photographs during wet weather that unified and dampened the focus of his images, on such days the steerage passengers would have not been visible, but cramped in their tight quarters below the deck.[149] In other words, his chance to photograph the steerage arose precisely because the sun was bright. Unfortunately for the picturesque photographer, bright sunlight necessitates a small aperture, which makes everything in the photograph appear sharply focused. Because (and despite the fact his own *Camera Notes* instructed photographers to do so) Stieglitz never used soft focus himself, the bright sunlight stripped Stieglitz of his usual techniques for unifying a disjointed composition. In the moments before exposing the image, Stieglitz had to make critical decisions regarding the trade-off between depth-of-field and exposure. That the gangplank and sky appear a bit too bright yet some of the steerage passengers in the distance of the upper deck are just slightly blurred, reveals that Stieglitz chose to open up his aperture just wide enough to reduce the depth of field as much as possible, necessarily sacrificing the detail in the highlights yet exposing them enough to enable resolving the

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149 The photograph Stieglitz took of his family on the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* shows them bundled in blankets. Alfred Stieglitz, *Clara Lauer, Kitty and Emmy Stieglitz*, 1907, in Greenough, *The Key Set,* 189.

problem later by burning during the printing process.[150] Even with the slight blur, the photograph is strikingly sharper than any photographs Stieglitz exhibited up to that point. The sharpness of the image and exposure problems made the proto-*Steerage* too much like an actual snapshot. It was reminiscent of Stieglitz's earlier snapshot in the snow (figure 21) in which the overexposed white of the snow made it difficult to discern the intended subject of photograph. Unlike his published "snapshots," it lacked environmental elements of weather to soften the uncomposed reality. One is reminded of Emerson's "mechanically-minded" photographer who, like a snapshooter, erroneously makes the image too sharp: "all the picture has been jammed into one plane, and all the interest equally divided," such that, "our eyes keep roving" and find no rest.[151] Stieglitz was not yet inclined to veer too far from such Emersonian principles of "naturalistic" vision.

The sharp focus and lack of weather also laid bare the startling presence of modernity. The *Kaiser Wilhelm II* was the fastest, most state-of-the-art ocean liner of its time. Structuring *The Steerage*'s composition are the ship's steel forms: the deck, gangplank, stairs, and funnel. The modern steelmaking process and industry was relatively new in the United States, and famously responsible for making possible the novel skyscrapers and booming capital that was just beginning to define New York's

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[150] Stieglitz trained in Berlin at the Technische Hochschule under Hermann Wilhelm Vogel in the department of chemistry and metallurgy. For one of his first assignments Stieglitz spent weeks trying to perfect an assignment photographing a plaster cast against black velvet, in which he was meant record details in both the highlights and shadows of the image. Finally Vogel informed him that it was an impossible task. A subsequent nearly impossible task Stieglitz that accomplished involved making the foreground and background perfectly sharp in an outdoor photograph. Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 72-75.

[151] Emerson, *Naturalistic Photography,* 165.

architecture and economy.[152] To contemporary viewers, unaccustomed to the presence of modern forms in art, the composition would have appeared dominated by newfangled forms. Unlike Stieglitz's *The Flat-iron*, the proto-*Steerage* was not shrouded in fog and snow to shield viewers from its startling newness and the idealized manmade forms. The bare steel forms of the gangplank and funnel jut unfettered into the frame without a visual narrative to contain them. Though his other "snapshots" featured similar diagonal lines, those lines guided the pictures' subjects and the viewer's eye together through the frame, offering a unified order to tame such unprecedented appearances of modernity. In contrast, the gangplank and funnel in the proto-*Steerage* did not guide the movement of subjects, but crisscrossed each other and cut through the subjects. Unlike a foot-trafficked boulevard, the gangplank's pathway feels starkly empty in contrast to the full deck of immigrants. As its bright form grabs the viewer's attention, guiding the eye to where it truncates at the upper deck of the steerage, it suggests an opportunity for freedom the immigrants cannot seize: not the picturesque freedoms of a premodern past.

This kind of contact between the old and the new fell outside of picturesque aesthetics. The immigrants do not suggest an intact racial order, but one that has been complicated by modern conditions. The immigrants hang over railings, linger on stairways, suspend their tattered Old World clothing to dry from the spokes of steel circling the ship's funnel. The "curieux" laundry hanging from "dilapidated red brick houses" that had excited Rafaëlli on the slumming expedition had indicated to him that he was in a location ungoverned by the norms of modernity. The deteriorating brick architecture belonged to an "old" New York that was quickly being displaced by steel-

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[152] William T. Hogan, Economic History of the Iron and Steel Industry in the United States, vol. 2, part III (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, 1970), 690-736; Kenneth Warren, *The American Steel Industry, 1850-1970: A Geographical Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 177-179.

framed buildings. Slumming photographs required one to go deep enough into the slums to find the areas most temporally removed from modernity. The aesthetics of such picturesque time travel was incomplete in Stieglitz's image. The nostalgic timelessness of European immigrants clashed with sleek shiny forms of modernity. The clash threatens rather than confirms the illusion of social and racial order. If picturesque immigrants at home in their neighborhoods suggested the American settlement's protraction of eternal order, those who lingered restlessly on a modern ship, in limbo between national territories, were at most a threat to settlement mythology, at least enough to make the picture illegible as an artwork.

In fact, the proto-*Steerage* may have appeared to visualize an actual threat to middle-class viewers. The clash emphasized the foreignness of immigrants by juxtaposing their forms incongruously with advancing modern technology. Additionally, viewers at the time would have seen in the photograph a mixture of several racial types, complicating the possibility of deciphering a clear narrative to contain their Otherness. This was an era of impassioned discourse about immigration and race, and the summer of 1907 saw numerous newspaper and magazine articles about intensifying problems of immigration and need for legislative restrictions.[153] Matthew Frye Jacobsen called the turn of the century the most "fractious period in the political history of whiteness in the United States." Heightened racial discourse about the differing features of various European immigrant "races" caused "racial classifications [to] successfully masquerade as features of the natural landscape." Racial differences between the different white races was thought to be composed of a fixed set of inherited character traits that were linked to physical traits: skin, hair, facial structure, and physique. Italians were described as having

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[153] McCauley, "The Making of a Modernist Myth," 39-41.

a swarthy brown complexion while Irish were low-browed with black tinted skin. A middle-class viewer at the time would have seen an array of racial types in the image rather than merely a group of undifferentiated European immigrants.

The crowd of immigrants was threatening not only because of their racial medley, but by the manner in which they idly crowd together, sitting, standing, and hanging over the railings. In the Gutach and Katwijk images Stieglitz had rendered his subjects as racial types who engaged in the same activities their ancestors had done for generations. In Hartmann's picturesque explorations of New York, the critic intended for photographers to pick out the racial types of Manhattan's immigrant neighborhoods. Hartmann's essay echoed Riis's attempt to delineate exactly which races lived in which neighborhoods, blocks, and tenements. Integral to the mythology that overlooked the reality of ethnic mixing on virtually every block and in every tenement in the Sixth Ward and the Lower East Side was the focus upon the inherited customs and occupations of racial types. In "Jewtown," Hartmann delineated the characteristics that belong exclusively to the Jewish type, observing Jews buying, selling, and haggling amidst peddlers' carts and booths, "avalanches" of produce, and "cases torn asunder and barrels turned upsidedown, with their contents poured onto sidewalks."[154] Their uncouth activities set within an squalid environment linked them to the timeless characteristics of their race. He urged photographers not to enter the Lower East Side's sweatshops like reform photographers interested in picturing modern labor conditions. Such pictures would fail to construct the comfortable stereotype of "miserly" Jews safely absorbed in activities in a time and place set aside from the modern city. The proto-*Steerage* similarly failed to construct such comforting narratives. Whereas immigrant industriousness made

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[154] Hartmann, "The Esthetic Side of Jewtown," 143-144.

Figure 49. *Bandit's Roost*, by Jacob Riis, 1888.

the slums familiar and quaint, idling was associated with the crimes that made the slums a matter for social reform discourse. Riis had catalogued different immigrants' tendencies for idling—Italians in "the Bend" tended to idle more so than Jews, for instance. He warned that boys who were not taught a labor trade but allowed to idle would "develop the latent possibilities for evil that lie hidden" within them.[155] Riis's *Bandit's Roost* (figure 49, 1888) pictured Italian immigrants in the Bend as idling criminals alongside details about the alley as the "vilest and worst" of the city, notorious for crime, filth, disease, and high child mortality rates.[156] Idle immigrants raised concerns about the spread of crime and disease beyond slum boundaries.[157] Therefore, though historians typically contrast Stieglitz's photograph to social reform photographs, it is likely that the immigrants' idleness in fact made the proto-*Steerage* look far more like images by Riis than Hartmann or Stieglitz had envisioned.

There were therefore a host of signifying and aesthetic problems that made the proto-*Steerage* unappealing to Stieglitz when he printed it in 1907. He later claimed that he rejected the image because Joseph Keiley dismissed it immediately, stating that it was not one, but two images, "an upper one and a lower one."[158] *A New York Riverfront* (figure 50, 1874) demonstrates that there was certainly a picturesque precedent for similar nautical imagery. The engraving shows some of the same strong diagonal cuts into a vertically-oriented image as the proto-*Steerage.* However, *Riverfront* includes wooden structural forms, not steel; the diagonals guide the activity of moving subjects, rather

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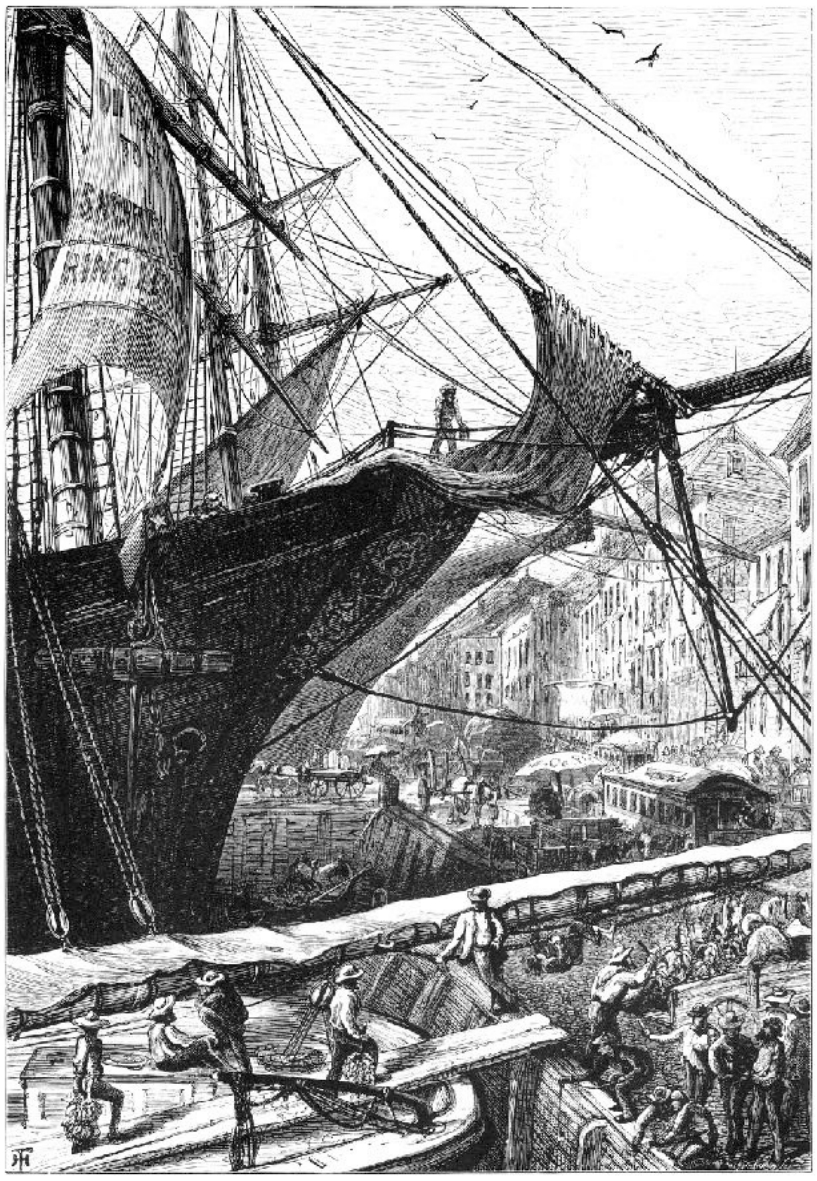
[155] Riis, *How the Other Half Lives,* 56, 181.

[156] Riis, *How the Other Half Lives,* 62-64.

[157] Riis, *How the Other Half Lives,* 3.

[158] Stieglitz, "How *The Steerage* Happened," *Twice a Year*, 130.



A NEW-YORK RIVER-FRONT.

Figure 50. *A New York Riverfront*, by Harry Fenn, 1874.

than restrict the movement of a crowd; its working-class subjects are pictured at work, not idling; it confirms the stability of social order on the American shore, not its undoing. It was therefore not so likely that Stieglitz rejected the image because the composition was divided, but instead because that divided composition did not harmonize with the structuring force of settler colonialism.

If early hand camera photographs in the artistic canon demonstrated the fact that settlers regard time and space as inherently malleable, the proto-*Steerage* failed to perform the sleight of hand that makes the new appear old and that turns a blind eye to all that is "impure" and "inauthentic." It was not illegible because it appeared to be two pictures in one, but because the settler's fragile construction of time, space, and social order greatly delimited what might be seen as a picture at all.

# Chapter Two: Primitivist Modernism in California and Manhattan

Though it would be several years before Stieglitz recognized the merits of the photograph he made during his May 1907 voyage to Europe, he did regard the trip itself as critical to the success of his career. In New York he had lost considerable esteem among the photographic community and sometimes considered closing the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession (commonly called "291") that he had opened in 1902.[1] According to historians, Stieglitz was depressed as he departed for Europe, aware of his need to "shift [his] attack" to restore the Photo-Secession's radical edge.[2] The trip to Europe supplied him with what he needed by exposing him to the new movements in modernism emerging from Paris. His career changed abruptly upon returning from Europe. Rather than close his New York gallery, he dedicated himself to 291 and *Camera Work* more vigorously. Stieglitz began exhibiting modern painting and sculpture and publishing articles on modern art written by his circle of American and European critics and excerpted from influential thinkers. Artists included Matisse, Cézanne, Rodin, Braque, Picasso, as well as a new crop of American painters: John Marin, Marsden

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[1] Though 291 was often thought to be synonymous with Stieglitz himself, he in fact relied heavily upon Edward Steichen, who had initially conceived 291, designed the galleries, selected artists for exhibitions, and installed the artwork. Steichen had also been central to the formation of the Photo-Secession and the defining of its mission. According to Richard Whelan, Stieglitz considered closing the galleries upon Steichen's departure to Europe because he likely felt insecure about his ability to maintain his leading edge without Steichen to show him the way. Richard Whelan, Alfred Stieglitz: A Biography, 217; William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-Garde* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977), 30-38.

[2] Charles Caffin to Stieglitz, July 1, 1907, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Series III, Box 9, folder 199. (YCAL hereafter); Richard Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz: A Biography* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995). 236-240; Greenough, *Modern Art and America: Alfred Stieglitz and his New York Galleries* (Boston: Bullfinch Press, 2000), 28-29.

Hartley, Max Weber, Marius de Zayas, and Arthur Dove. Writers included Gertrude Stein, Henri Bergson, Julius Meier-Graefe, and Sadakichi Hartmann. He surrounded himself with a new milieu of artists and writers from Europe and America known as the Stieglitz Circle.[3] After 1907 Stieglitz also pointedly excluded the work of almost every pictorialist photographer from publication and exhibitions, and publicly discredited its photographers and techniques, marking the end of pictorialism as a major movement in photography.[4] He instead connected photography to ideas motivating the European avant-garde (in ways that baffled most of his American audience), adopting a new stance about what methods were appropriate to the medium of photography as a fine art. This short period of his career (which would end with another milieu turnover in 1917) was perhaps the most critical to his lasting reputation as the "father" of American photography. It concluded with the lasting definition of straight photography as sharp, honest, and humble.[5] But perhaps more importantly, Stieglitz's efforts during this period publicly linked art photography to broader movements in modernism, finally securing photography's standing in the fine art canon.

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[3] The Stieglitz Circle included artists John Marin, Max Weber, Arther Dove, Marsden Hartley, Abraham Walkowitz, Marius de Zayas, Katharine Rhoades, and Marion Beckett; amateurs, Paul Haviland and Agnes Meyer; critics, Charles Caffin, J. Nilsen Laurvik, Sadakichi Hartmann, and Benjamin de Casseres; photographers and editors, John B. Kerfoot and Joseph T. Keiley. Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-Garde*, 78. This circle is distinct from the Second Stieglitz Circle. See chapter three.

[4] "The International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography" organized by Stieglitz at the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York was both the capstone of the Photo-Secession's achievements, sealing the group's popular and critical recognition within the arts, and also a nail in the coffin marking Stieglitz's last effort to promote pictorialist photography. Afterwards he ignored morst of the pictorialists and denounced them as mediocre. Notably, Gertrude Käsebier, Clarence White, Karl Strauss, and Alfin Langdon Coburn would soon begin to operate a rival photographic group, producing the periodical, *Platinum Print.* Greenough, *Modern Art and America*, 559; William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1983), 144-148.

[5] For discussion of Strand's photographs, see introduction.

This chapter investigates the connections Stieglitz forged between American photography and European modernism during this period and draws links between the "honest" realism of straight photography and modernist primitivist methods of abstraction. I argue that Stieglitz did not merely adopt a formal language of "shapes" expressive of his "deepest feelings" as his 1920s hindsight narrative about *The Steerage* too simply asserts. Rather, by importing the ideas of European modernism into the American context, Stieglitz engaged in establishing what I term "settler primitivism" as a central tactic of American modernist straight photography.

The fit between *The Steerage* and modernist painting is often uncritically verified by Picasso's favorable reception of the image, which Stieglitz received second-hand in 1914 in a letter from caricaturist Marius de Zayas. De Zayas reported that the painter had "admired" the photograph and concluded that Stieglitz was "the only one who has understood photography."[6] This statement certainly offers compelling evidence for a relationship between the two artists' work, but stops short of describing the nature of the connection. It is also true that Stieglitz's arrival in Paris nearly coincided with the birth of cubism, typically marked by Picasso's completion of the proto-cubist painting *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* in the spring of 1907.[7] If Stieglitz saw Picasso's painting during this period, it was most likely in 1910 when it was reproduced for the first time in Gelett Burgess's famous 1910 article "The Wild Men of Paris," printed in *The Architectural Record.* That year, painter Max Weber, who was strongly influenced by seeing *Les*

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[6] De Zayas to Stieglitz, June 11, 1914, reprinted in de Zayas, *How, When, and Why*, 177.

[7] In both cases, these artworks were recognized as significant in retrospect. The date of the completion of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* is the subject of debate. William Rubin dates the completion as July 1907, noting that it was only retrospectively considered part of the cubist canon in the 1920s. William Rubin, "Picasso," in *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, ed. William Rubin, vol. I (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1984), 250.

*Demoiselles* in the article, joined forces with de Zayas to educate Stieglitz about his own work. The artists argued with Stieglitz about his views on photography in an attempt to make him "see" that his own pictorialist work was not as strong as several negatives he had overlooked.[8] During this time de Zayas reportedly discovered *The Steerage* among Stieglitz's unrealized proof sheets and urged the photographer to reconsider it.[9] While the contents of those conversations are unknown, given de Zayas and Weber's admiration of Picasso, it is likely that Stieglitz was encouraged to see the relationship between *The Steerage* and cubism.

Despite these compelling connections, I suspect that the connection between cubism and *The Steerage* has come to appear self-evident because of the frequent repetition of Picasso's praise for the image, causing it to be retrospectively analyzed in ways that are inconsistent with Stieglitz's intentions. Like other aspects of Stieglitz's career that were tautologically framed in retrospect, I contend that this oft-repeated narrative requires closer examination. Picasso's regard for the image certainly caused Stieglitz to elevate its distinction and affected its trajectory into the modernist canon. And Stieglitz

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[8] Wayne Anderson, *Picasso's Brothel: Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (New York: Other Press, 2002), 33-34; Greenough, *Modern Art and America*, 558-559; Judith Cousins and Héléne Seckel, "Chronology of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 1907-1939," in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, ed. William Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 145-160; William Rubin, "The Genesis of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*," in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, 21; Gelett Burgess, "The Wild Men of Paris," *The Architectural Record* 28, no. 5 (1910): 401–11.

[9] Steichen recounts this story as occurring during a period in which Max Weber and Marius de Zayas educated Stieglitz about merits in his own work that he did not yet understand. Max Weber was only involved in 291 from December 1909 to January 1911, making 1910 the most likely time for these conversations. Greenough, *Modern Art and America*, 559; Steichen claims that de Zayas discovered *The Steerage*. Steichen, *A Life in Photography,* chap. 4; However, Richard Whelan claims that Steichen reported that Weber found *The Steerage* but gives no citation for this account. Richard Whelan, *Stieglitz on Photography: His Selected Essays and Notes* (New York: Aperture, 2000), 197.

was certainly influenced by Picasso.[10] However, as I retrace each artist's conception of photography's fit with modernism, I reveal that de Zayas, Picasso, and Stieglitz likely had drastically different perceptions of *The Steerage*'s merits around the time of Picasso's statement. My analysis of these concurrent yet divergent perceptions of *The Steerage* also reveals the sheer pliability of the image to different interpretations, an act that in itself disrupts the stability of terms such as "straight," "honest," and "direct" at the core of photographic modernism.

I complicate the connection typically drawn between Picasso and *The Steerage* by drawing conclusions from a parallel timeline, tracking Stieglitz's changing regard for Cézanne. I argue that Cézanne's watercolors were central to Stieglitz's development of primitivist techniques. Stieglitz's arrival in Paris coincided with Cézanne's rise in popularity among European artists and critics following his death in 1906. Steichen took Stieglitz to the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery in Paris that summer, where he saw works by Cézanne for the first time. On exhibit were seventy-nine watercolors purchased by the Bernheim-Jeune brothers after the artist's death in 1906.[11] It was the first major show of Cézanne's work anywhere, soon to be followed by a retrospective of more than fifty oils and watercolors at the Salon d'Automne after Stieglitz departed Paris in October. Having never heard of Cézanne, Stieglitz was shocked to see what he described as "nothing there but empty paper with a few splashes of color" priced at 1,000 francs a piece.[12] Stieglitz

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10 Stieglitz visited Picasso's studio in September 1911, staged exhibitions of Picasso at 291, published photographs of *The Resevoir at Horta de Ebro* and Gertrude Stein's essay, "Portrait of Picasso, in *Camera Work* special edition (August 1912).

11 John Rewald, *Cézanne and America: Dealers, Collectors, Artists and Critics, 1891-1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 110-112.

12 Dorothy Norman, "From Writings and Conversations of Alfred Stieglitz," *Twice a Year*, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 1938): 81; Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz,* 226.

was not alone in his miscomprehension. Steichen recalled that the two photographers had "laughed like country yokels" in the gallery, joking that Steichen could create in a single day one hundred watercolors and exhibit them at 291 as Cézanne's.[13] Significantly, only four years later in 1911, Stieglitz would mount an exhibition of the same watercolors he viewed at Berheim-Jeune. Upon opening the box of watercolors on loan from Paris, Stieglitz claimed, "lo and behold: the first Cézanne I looked at appeared to me as realistic as a photograph. What had happened to me?"[14] Within the span of four years his understanding of modern art had so drastically shifted that splashes of paint on bare paper resembled his own photographs, which he described as the "straightest kind of straight photography."[15]

Following Cézanne's exhibition, Stieglitz published *The Steerage* for the first time in *Camera Work* no. 36 (1911). *Camera Work* 36 was Stieglitz's most pronounced thesis on photography to-date, featuring sixteen of his own photographs interleaved with articles on the most cutting-edge ideas popular in Paris regarding psychology and modern art, terminating with a Picasso nude. *The Steerage*'s place as ninth of the sixteen photographs did not mark it as particularly important to the thesis he presented.Overall, however, the photographs were sharper with more complicated compositions and subject matter than his prior work. They demonstrated that Stieglitz had indeed reevaluated his work, following Weber and de Zayas's advice. I argue that the works Stieglitz presented in *Camera Work* 36 marked a significant turning point in modernist photography, one

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[13] Steichen did in fact make one such watercolor for the 1911 exhibition at 291. Edward Steichen, *A Life in Photography* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963), chap. 4.

[14] Norman, "Conversations of Alfred Stieglitz," 84.

[15] "Notes on '291'," *Camera Work,* no. 42-43 (April-July 1913), 19. This unsigned description of Stieglitz's photographs referred to the photographs in his 1913 exhibition at 291, which included the same photographs as *Camera Work* 36. The description was most likely written by Stieglitz.

which paralleled his shifting perception of Cézanne. This new perception was born of his grasp of European primitivist modernism, and particularly Bergson's theories that were popular in Paris. Primitivism and Bergson supplied the idea that art photography was more truthful than empirical photographic facts because it emerged from the artist's "naive" sensed contact with the visual world. The value placed on a "primitive" perception of the world demanded a more drastic move away from idealization and beauty than picturesque photography's value of roughness and irregularity.[16] For primitivists, all forms of idealization were regarded as the stuff of civilization's contrived pictorial conventions, rather than a pure contact with the artist's subject matter. Straight photography was therefore not so much about accuracy as it was about sensory contact. I argue that central to the photographs Stieglitz presented in *Camera Work* 36 was his understanding of Cézanne's work as expressing a primitive feeling of enfoldment in the world, skillfully translated into a geometry of planes.

Primitivist modernism in Europe was based in colonial racial fantasies that drew distinctions between pure knowing "white savages" and dimwitted frightened black African "savages." The importation of primitivism to the American context involved translating its narratives into settler colonial fantasies in which white settlers seek to replace Indigenous people on the land. Embodying the "savage" for the settler became a means of "indigenizing" settlers. Thus, while modernism may have looked radically new, it was merely a different guise for disavowing Indigenous presence and history on occupied territory. Stieglitz's urban scenes, pictured from a primitive embodied perspective, presented the settler photographer as "prior" to modernity and as such

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16 For the sake of readability, several terms that appear in this chapter will only be selectively placed in quotes, though they always indicate an ideological belief or contextual meaning of the term: primitive, savage, naive, real, crude, and pagan.

indigenized to a landscape undergoing bewildering urban transformation. Settler primitivism thus emerged as a visual cultural counterpart to the twentieth century's attempts to complete the spatial, temporal, and ideological settlement of the American territory posed by urbanization and late Industrialization.

Its reach was not limited to urban modernity, but extended to the reaches of the just-"closed" American frontier. In order to understand more fully how settler primitivism in photography might pose a challenge to typical conceptions of modernist straight photography, I also examine Stieglitz's work alongside the work of California photographer Anne Brigman. In what often appears to historians to be an anomaly in Stieglitz's preference for undoctored straight photography at this late date, Stieglitz sustained his support for and exhibition of Brigman's obviously hand-manipulated nudes set within the California landscape. I argue that Brigman's photographs fit Stieglitz's conception of settler primitivist modernism because she embodied a "primitive" white femininity in sync with nature's rhythms and a "pure" uninhibited (hetero)sexuality. Brigman's nude body in communion with the Sierras revised the visual narrative for an area that had figured prominently in Christian Manifest Destiny propaganda of the mid-nineteenth century. Her overt manipulations of the photographic medium confirmed her feminine naiveté, picturing white innocence on sites of tremendous genocide and dispossession. Paired together as examples of settler primitivism, Brigman and Stieglitz's photographs highlight modernism's capacity to resupply the American settlement with a visual culture of usable pasts fitted to the cultural shifts of the early twentieth century. Such analysis demands that we ask of modernist photographs that appear utterly disconnected from straightforward acts of settlement: No matter how many skyscrapers or white people appear, are we ever looking at territory that is not Indigenous land?

## Importing Modernism, Reshaping Primitivism

Following Stieglitz's 1907 trip to Europe, photography appeared to take a backseat at both 291 and in *Camera Work.* To his complaining subscribers (of dwindling numbers), Stieglitz and his writers frequently reiterated that the burden of proving photography's status as a fine art had been accomplished, freeing the Secession's public venues to exhibit other modern arts in order to demonstrate the relationship between photography and other media.[17] While such statements appear to evidence a preexisting knowledge on Stieglitz's part, in reality Stieglitz was actively learning along with his audiences, and sometimes struggled himself to grasp the artworks or their relationship to photography.[18] Despite his uncertainty about aspects of the artworks he exhibited Stieglitz used his venues deliberately, frequently timing the artworks and articles so that exhibitions at 291 might be contextualized by didactic material that appeared in *Camera Work.* Similarly, 291 exhibitions often presented juxtapositions to other exhibitions in the city. For example, in anticipation of the 1913 Armory Show, Stieglitz kicked off a sequence of short exhibitions, beginning with a solo exhibition of his own work. The discursive web of articles and artworks presented in *Camera Work* and 291 therefore compose an archive of American modernist photography's process of becoming in relationship to European modernism—a process that was as uncertain as it was tenacious.

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17 See for example Paul B. Haviland, "The Home of the Golden Disk," *Camera Work* 25 (January 1909): 22; Alfred Stieglitz, "Photo-Secession Notes," *Camera Work* 30 (April 1910), 54; Charles Caffin, "The Camera Point of View in Painting and Photography," *Camera Work* 24 (October 1908), 26.

18 Max Weber, Marius de Zayas, and Steichen all reported putting considerable effort into educating Stieglitz about modernism, which was difficult for him to understand. Sarah Greenough, *Modern Art and America*, 23, 32; Sarah Greenough, *The Key Set*, xxiii.

With the deepening relationship to European art, settler colonial mimicry reached new heights.[19] What I call "settler primitivism" evolved from American modernists' incorporation of ideas and techniques from European primitivism that arose at the turn of the century. For the purpose of elaborating the racial logics of primitivism, I find it useful to distinguish not only between the colonial logics of European primitivism and the settler colonial logics of settler primitivism, but also to distinguish between two broad forms of primitivism in Europe—based in racial fantasies about white Europeans and black Africans.

At its most fundamental sense all forms of primitivism represent a desire for "authenticity" that defies aesthetic canons of beauty.[20] All forms of modernist primitivism involved artistic techniques—such as a thick brushstroke or a mode of interpreting dimensional space as abstract shapes—that was believed to exhibit a naive or primitive perception of reality, that was more "pure" than civilized modern perception. Artists' appropriations of primitive techniques were believed to result from their capacity to access more a primitive state of mind. Distinction between some of the aesthetic techniques of primitivism arose from the different racial fantasies from which each artist derived their  conception of primitivity. For example, Picasso and artists in his circle appropriated visual techniques from material culture made by Africans and other colonized people. They believed that African masks and other objects demonstrated a primitive perception of the world as a dark, confusing "Land of Fright," ruled by vicious

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19 See chapter one; Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, "Settler Colonies," in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, eds. Henry Scwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 362-363, 369-370; Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994), 85-92.

20 Patricia Leighton, *The Liberation of Painting: Modernism and Anarchism in Avant-Guerre Paris* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 80.

gods who needed to be appeased by ritual objects. As de Zayas stated in a 291 exhibition catalog, they believed Black Africans to be "completely devoid of the faculties of observation and analysis," as if they lacked the intelligence or experience to be able to identify even ordinary objects in the world around them encountered on a daily basis.[21] Primitivist artists drawing from African art believed that modernist abstraction portrayed "a sensibility obliterated by an education, which makes us always connect what we see with what we know."[22] Primitivism based in stereotypes about Africans thus expressed total ignorance about the relationship between form and signification.

In contrast, other Europeans drew upon racialized perceptions of "pure" races of Europeans by appropriating techniques from rural working-class communities believed to be untouched by modernity and race-mixing. This attitude was typified by movements such as the Munich Secession which drew upon techniques of rural Europeans.[23] Artists credited the naiveté of white primitives for the ability to express a deep and mystical knowledge of nature that modern Europeans had lost. Their crude visual techniques were thought to express their connection to a more pure and joyful time when whites had enjoyed a connection to tight-knit communities, nature's cycles, and unfettered sexuality. The appropriation of these techniques was therefore believed by whites to embody the artist's own capacity to access buried inner-knowledge of primitive ways of being.

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[21] Marius de Zayas, catalog essay, *Statuary in Wood by African Savages: The Root of Modern Art* (New York: 291, 1914), reprinted in Marius de Zayas and Francis M. Nauman, *How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York*, ed. Francis M. Naumann (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 56.

[22] De Zayas, *Statuary in Wood by African Savages*, 56; See also conversation between Pablo Picasso and André Malraux transcribed in André Malraux, *La Tête d'obsidienne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 17-19, excerpted in Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch, editors, *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 33.

[23] Donna M. Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005), 187-189.

European primitivisms conformed to Bhabha's conception of "colonial mimicry." They visualized what Bhabha calls a "ruse of desire," expressing a superficial affection for colonized subjects that covertly served to strengthen colonial power.[24] Primitivism, however, offers a somewhat paradoxical case of mimicry. As Patricia Leighton documents, modern artists opposed France's colonial policies in Africa and sought personal freedom from the artifice and restraints of modern civilized life. Unfortunately the primitivist tropes intended to signify their distance from European civilization affirmed colonial power by inscribing modernism with facial fantasies.[25] Racist tropes in modernism were not confined to painting and sculpture, but affected Parisians perceptions of racialized individuals. There was little to no cultural distinction made between African statues—believed to belong to a timeless past—and the contemporary black body. Black American performer Josephine Baker was perceived to embody the same supernatural qualities as a carved fetish object.[26] Primitivism thus served to reinvigorate rather than disrupt colonial power.

If such slippage was operative in France, it was certainly shaped to fit American racial logics when it traveled overseas. Anna C. Chave argues that reception of primitivism in the United States reflected fears regarding increasing social power of women and black Americans.[27] Racial values tellingly affected descriptions of primitivist

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[24] Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man," 91.

[25] Patricia Leighton, "The White Peril and *L'Art nègre*: Picasso, Primitivism, and Anticolonialism," *Race-ing Art History: Critical Readings in Race and Art History*, ed. Kymberly N. Pinder (New York: Routledge, 2002), 233-260; Leighton, *The Liberation of Painting*, 57-84.

[26] James Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," *Race-ing Art History*, 221-222.

[27] Anna C. Chave, "New Encounters with Les Demoiselles d'Avignon," in *Race-Ing Art History: Critical Readings in Race and Art History*, ed. Kymberly N. Pinder (New York: Routledge, 2002), 274-278.

exhibitions in New York. Stieglitz not only imported European primitivist artwork, but also staged several exhibitions of artwork made by "authentic primitives" intended to educate the American public about the logics of primitivism. Four exhibitions of artwork by white children appeared between 1912 and 1916, while in 1914 an exhibition of African objects entitled "Statuary in Wood by African Savages: The Root of Modern Art" was timed to supplement the recent shock of the Armory Show. Though reviewers similarly expressed their initial "horror" at finding crude artworks in both exhibitions, they arrived at different conclusion after considering the artworks more carefully. A reviewer of the children's art exhibition explained that, the more one looked at the drawings (with the help of Stieglitz's explanations), the more the artworks spoke to the what "every one of us has felt as the nascent artist within him." The writer concluded that the artworks were "juvenile masterpieces" that attested to "genius" not "confined" by "established limits."[28] In contrast, a reviewer of the African exhibition explained that the "weird wood carvings" were "grotesque and horrible masks" that had been made by "the black savage craftsman [who] wanted to frighten off, or else propitiate, evil spirits."[29] Another reviewer noted that the crude carvings resulted from Africans' "childlike" vision caused by "the premature junction and subsequent ossification of the sutures of the cranium" which caused brain development to arrest and "go backward in early youth."[30] The reviewer echoed the views of pseudoscientific racism regarding Black Americans.

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28 "Some Remarkable Work by Very Young Artists: Pencil-Bound Painters and Draughtsmen (the Enthusiasts Say) Might Learn Much From the Pictures of These Youthful Futurists of Four and Post-Impressionists of Two," *The (New York) Evening Sun*, April 27, 1912, Alfred Stieglitz/Georgia O'Keeffe Archive, Yale Collection of American Literature, YCAL, Series III, Box 110.

29 "African Savages the First Futurists," *The World Magazine*, January 24, 1915, 20. YCAL, Series III, Box 110.

30 Frederick W. Eddy, *Sunday World*, October 29, 1916. Reprinted in de Zayas, *How, When, and Why*, 63-63.

Africans' "childlike" work was thus perceived as resulting from a failure of vision and brain deficiency, whereas white children's artwork was perceived as the product of genius.

The Armory Show's controversial public reception and subsequent influence on American artists has been widely studied. However the means by which the colonial racial fantasies of primitivism were transformed in the settler colonial context remains largely unstudied. Following Partick Wolf's influential thesis that settler colonialism is a structure, rather than an event, it follows that the development of American primitivist modernism demands more scrutiny because it contains many of the *structuring* elements significant to settler colonial ideology: America's ambivalent relationship to Europe, racial fantasies about colonized subjects, and myths about whites' ancient past. Accordingly, the relationship between European and American primitivism offers a unique opportunity for settler colonial studies to transcend the limitations of studying Indigenous and white interaction, to apprehend settler ideology in visual cultures that appear unrelated to obvious acts of settlement.

I argue that primitivism was not simply imported to the United States, but instead transformed in the American context to make particular sense to the settler colonial ideology. As Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson point out, settler colonial mimicry mimics both European culture and indigeneity in a desire for authority.[31] By drawing upon European conceptions of primitivism, American artists developed an arts scene that was not initially on equal footing with overseas art discourses, but instead self-consciously addressed to Europe as the cultural authority on modern art. On the other hand, the racist stereotypes that were so well-suited to colonial anxieties and fixations were transformed in the American context to fit settlers' desire to assert their indigeneity to the

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[31] Johnston and Lawson, "Settler Colonies," 362-363, 369-370.

continent. As scholars of race in America adequately document, white Americans' fixation upon racialized Others was central to the founding of the nation, evolving in ways particular to specific locations, historical moments, and racialized populations in American culture.[32] By the twentieth century, American and European racial fantasies cannot be said to be interchangeable. American modernists, including those in the Stieglitz Circle, appropriated styles from Indigenous and Black American cultures that reflected their illusions about each cultures' primitivity.[33] Perhaps more notably, notions about "primitive" whites took on a particularly fanciful form in the United States. Though Europeans appropriated techniques from "pure" European races living on their genuine ancestral homelands, Americans' relationship to their land was everywhere relatively recent. As I explore below, primitivist modernism became a means by which an "ancient" or "ancestral" relationship to the land could be fabricated. The Stieglitz Circle artists imagined that their "crude" use of their mediums revealed an innate knowledge of

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[32] See for example Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016), 2-16; Veracini, *Settler Colonialism,* 48; Matthew Crow, "Atlantic North America from Contact to the Late Nineteenth Century," *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, eds. Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini (London: Routledge, 2017), 99-100; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 15-38; Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 246-248; Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation, " *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1, no. 1 (2015): 52-54.

[33] Max Weber was perhaps the most notable example from the Stieglitz Circle during this period, using source material from Indigenous Americans, Black Americans, Africans, and other cultures. See Max Weber, *Cubist Poems* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1914); See also Jacqueline Francis, *Making Race: Modernism and Racial Art in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 40-42; Elizabeth Hutchinson, *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890-1915* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

the American landscape.[34] Even primitivism that drew upon notions of whites' heritage was therefore ideologically differentiable between Europe and America.

As a means of explaining how to view the artworks he promoted, Stieglitz exposed American audiences to the psychological and philosophical discourses underpinning Primitivism that he encountered while in Europe. During his 1909 trip to Paris Stieglitz learned about theories of subjective perception from Leo Stein. Stieglitz reportedly visited the home of Leo and Gertrude Stein and sat "transfixed"—and somewhat puzzled—as he listened to Leo discuss art, surrounded by the Steins' collection of Cézannes, Matisses, and Picassos.[35] Leo Stein's understanding of art was influenced by the "father" of American psychology William James and art historian Bernard Berenson, who theorized on the corporeality of vision. That Berenson incorporated James's psychology into his analysis of Renaissance painters was especially important to Stein.[36] James's theory of visual perception in his *Principles of Psychology* drew heavily upon Francis Galton's studies of visual memories that compared the visual recall of European men, women, and children to that of African Sān people (referred to as "Bushmen") and Inuit people from what is now the Qikiqtaaluk Region of Nunavut, Canada (referred to

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[34] Though I only analyze photographs in this chapter, it is also notable that American painters in the Stieglitz Circle also used their medium in a similar manner during this period: Max Weber, John Marin, Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, Abraham Walkowitz. See Wanda M Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* (Tacoma: Tacoma Art Museum, 2005).

[35] Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* (New York: Random House, 1973), 111.

[36] Jill Kyle, "Paul Cézanne, 1911: Nature Reconstructed," in *Modern Art and America*, 104; Alison Brown, "Bernard Berenson and 'Tactile Values' in Florence," in Joseph Connors and Deitrich Seybold, *Bernard Berenson: Formation and Heritage* (Florence: Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, 2014), 111-116; Rachel Cohen, *Bernard Berenson: A Life in the Picture Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 104-105; Mary Ann Calo, *Bernard Berenson and the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia : Temple University Press, 1994), 80; Rewald, *Cézanne and America*, 19-22, 66-67; Leo Stein, *Appreciation: Painting, Poetry & Prose* (New York: Random House, 1947), 53, 115-123, 154. Originally published in 1956; Leo Stein, *A-B-C of Aesthetics* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1927), 81.

as "Eskimos").[37] Galton determined that "primitive" peoples—as well as European children—had more developed capacity to recall visual sensations, whereas educated European men such as scientists had less capacity to recall visual sensations. Galton concluded that white males' more developed faculties for abstract diverted their awareness away from visible reality and instead toward the non-visible conceptual reality of ideas and meaning. Drawing upon Galton's conclusions, James divided "sensation" from "perception." He described "sensation" as a "primitive" form of vision that was dependent upon touch and experienced through the embeddedness of the body within the world. In "sensation," vision and touch were undifferentiated. Sensations might be stimulated by visual memories, illusions, or hallucinations that presented themselves to the mind as if they were real bodily sensations. In contrast civilized "perception" involved the mental application of concepts to deciphering visible reality, allowing people to "see" rationally by adding layers of meaning to the soup of visible facts of existence.[38] James and Galton both referenced scientific tests that purportedly demonstrated that illusions and hallucinations were primitive apprehensions of the world experienced in its barest state—without the intellect attaching meaning and spatial order to the objects surrounding the body.[39] The sensible reality associated with the body and primitivity therefore came to be understood as one that was more "real" or unencumbered by

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[37] Galton identifies the "Eskimos" in his study as the people observed by American Arctic explorer Charles Francis Hall who used Inuit people as guides. Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1883), 102-103; For more on the scientific and popular belief that white children and nonwhites occupied similar places on an evolutionary scale, see Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 294.

[38] William James, *The Principles of Psychology,* vol 2 (London: Dover Publications, 1950), 51-57. First published in 1890 by Henry Holt.

[39] James, *Principles of Psychology,* 55-59; Galton, *Inquiries*, 99-105.

civilized knowledge. For Stein and those he influenced, such science explained the crude appearance of modern paintings.

The value placed on the accuracy of primitive perception was also echoed by the influential theories of Henri Bergson's *Creative Evolution* (1907).[40] Parallel to James's ideas, Bergson described the divergence between intelligence and instinct, which he posited as the endpoints of two extremities of the process of evolution. The evolution of "intelligence" tended more and more toward abstract analysis, while the development of "intuition" tended toward lived experience. "Intelligence and instinct are turned in opposite directions, the former towards inert matter, the latter towards life," Bergson explained. "Intelligence, by means of science… goes all around life, taking from outside the greatest possible number of views of it, drawing it into itself instead of entering into it."[41] Bergson suggested an incommensurable difference between a superficial rational view of reality and a lived sensed perception of reality, with a decided preference for "intuition." He posited that the scientific intellect did not perceive reality at all, but simply forced reality to serve its own abstract logic.

Here, Bergson certainly had photography in mind. He frequently alluded to new photographic technologies for studying motion, such as the cinematograph (early cinema), chronophotography (motion studies), and x-rays, as exemplary of the problems

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[40] For discussion of Bergson's influence on modernists, see Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighten, *Cubism and Culture* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001).

[41] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1913), 176, reprinted in *Camera Work,* no. 36 (Oct 1911): 20-21. *Creative Evolution* was originally published in France in 1907. The first English translation appeared in 1911.

with the evolution of abstract intelligence.[42] Likely referencing the Lumière brothers' early cinematograph footage of French soldiers marching, Bergson observed:

> With photographs, each of which represents the regiment in a fixed attitude, it reconstitutes the mobility of the regiment marching. It is true that if we had to do with photographs alone, however much we might look at them, we should never see them animated: with immobility set beside immobility, even endlessly, we could never make movement.[43]

According to Bergson, photographs—perhaps even when reconstituted to simulate motion in time—were still superficial fragments offering no sense of the "real" internal experience of locomotion. Lived reality for Bergson necessarily transcended all theories attempting to describe it as a mechanistic system. Bergson also provided an example of scientific observation of a caterpillar's nervous system. He explained that even though the caterpillar could never achieve the type of abstract knowledge about itself found in such photographs, its intuitive experience of its own nervous system necessarily exceeded that of the observers: "*lived* rather than *represented*."[44] For Bergson such superior "lived" experience was not merely internal, but also a perception of the external world. He believed the external world could also be understood better through intuition than intellectual study:

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[42] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 31, 305, 332

[43] Bergson, 305. It is unclear from this passage if Bergson viewed the footage projected to reanimate the movement because he seems to refer to photographs placed beside each other, more typical of chronophotography. However, showings of the Lumière brothers' footage was certainly popular in Paris at the time of his writing. It is possible that Bergson was instead referring to Étienne-Jules Marey's chronophotographs of soldiers. However, those images depicted singular soldiers rather than a marching regiment as Bergson states.

[44] Bergson's emphasis. Bergson, 175.

> The savage understands better than the civilized man how to judge distances, to determine a direction, to retrace by memory the often complicated plan of the road he has traveled, and so to return in a straight line to his starting-point.

Any attempt to visually or mathematically represent the same space that the "savages" and animals intuitively navigated would necessarily "degrade" the space into mere "logic."[45] For Bergson, photography was merely a surface representation that reduced life to a "homogenous space" that could neither portray the experience of embodiment nor the spaces through which the body moved.

The process of "creative evolution" however, offered some redeeming hope for traversing the gulf between intelligence and intuition. Bergson theorized that civilized people might evolve their intuitive faculty by developing a feeling of "sympathy" for the living things around them in order to intuit something of their lived experience. In a passage reprinted in *Camera Work* 36, he described artists as particularly well-suited to the development of such an affinity:

> This intention [of life] is just what the artist tries to regain, in placing himself back within the object by a kind of sympathy, in breaking down, by an effort of intuition, the barrier that space puts up between him and his model.[46]

Bergson's conception of the artist seemed to support the tendencies toward abstraction, advocating for a felt experience of space and embodiment that emerged from

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[45] Bergson, 211-212.

[46] Bergson, 177, reprinted in *Camera Work,* no. 36, 20-21. While artists were drawn to Bergson's theories because of this passage, it is notable that Bergson himself condemned the cubists' interpretation of his work. Antliff, *Inventing Bergson,* 1.

a subjectivity deeply entwined with the unfolding of life. With the materialization of these concepts, ideas about "intuition" and "sensation"  and "primitivity" began to stand for artists' genuine desire to escape the artifice of modern life and transcend the limitations of its representational logic.

Bergson's theories would however seem to pose a problem for Stieglitz's desire to draw parallels between photography and other modern arts. Whereas artists of other media might transcend the optical science of representation and instead paint or sculpt a felt sense of an object, the photograph's indexical relationship to the visible exterior of an object was not so easily transcended.

Assimilating theories of embodied and subjective vision required Stieglitz to transform his understanding of the camera's capacity to produce truthful effects. Charles Caffin's *Camera Work* article (1911) describing Cézanne's watercolors as "sensations" that were truthful enough to "stand the test of scientific scrutiny" was telling of Stieglitz's changing attitude.[47] Such scientific scrutiny certainly suggested the science of intuitive vision. Cézanne offered Stieglitz a way to portray corporeal perception as an "organized system of planes, composed of objects, plastically real, enveloped in the rhythm of atmospheric depth."[48] To incorporate such an alternative "scientific" vision into photography would defy not only ideals of beauty in art photography, but also the visual conventions of objectivity in scientific photography. Additionally, just as the Stieglitz Circle's believed that primitivism revealed the "principle which had been the animating spirit of art from the time when it emerged from a purely intuitive state," their primitivist

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[47] Charles Caffin, "A Note on Paul Cézanne," *Camera Work* 34-35 (April-July 1911): 47-51; J. Nilson Laurvik, "The Coming Cubists Explain Their Picture Puzzles: Picasso and Cézanne Tell Us What They Mean," *Boston Evening Transcript*, April 12, 1913, 2. YCAL, Series III, Box 246.

[48] Caffin, "A Note on Paul Cézanne," 48-49.

photography would similarly pose as a truthful view of the nation from the "direct" perspective of its "ancient" inhabitants.[49]

## Brigman: A Primitive of the California Wilds

Shortly after the debut of *The Steerage* in *Camera Work* (April 1912), Stieglitz published photographs by Anne Brigman.[50] Brigman's overtly manipulated allegorical nudes set in the California wilderness have often seemed to historians to be out of place at this later date in *Camera Work* when Stieglitz had largely ceased exhibiting anything but sharply focused unmanipulated straight photography—when he exhibited photography at all. Brigman's images are unmistakably staged and clearly hand-manipulated, qualities that would have been easily legible to many of Stieglitz's readers. Brigman frequently altered the exposure of select parts of her images by making several generations of internegatives and interpositives. She used techniques of scratching and drawing on her negatives in order to eliminate unwanted elements, added clouds and lines, and reinforced distortions of form that fit the mood and allegorical meanings that she intended.[51] Additionally she printed on silver bromide paper, a cheaper more amateurish material that was disapproved of by advanced photographers like the Photo-Secessionists and the serious practitioners that subscribed to *Camera Work*.[52] Some

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[49] Laurvik, "The Coming Cubists," 2.

[50] Anne Brigman, Plates I-IV, *Camera Work*, no. 38 (April 1912).

[51] Kathleen A. Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice: O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 104.

[52] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, 104.

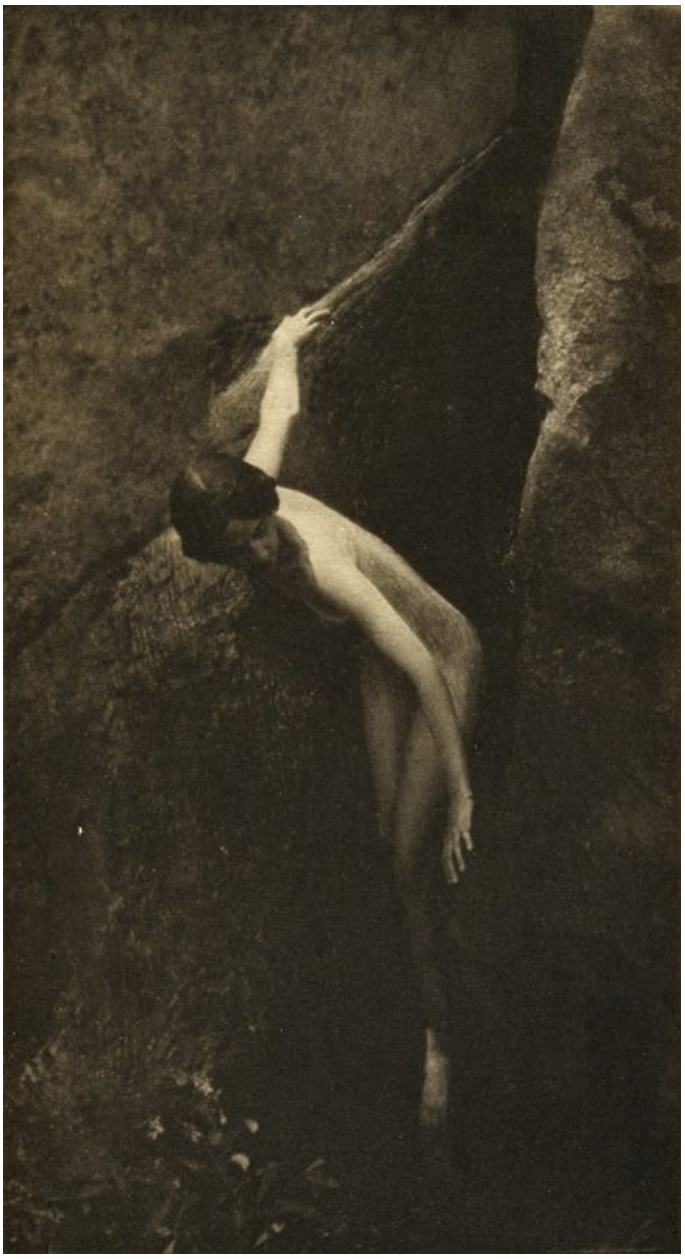

Figure 51. *The Cleft of the Rock*, by Anne Brigman, 1905.

historians postulate that perhaps Stieglitz meant to make an example of Brigman to the other Photo-Secessionists who he accused of using him as their commercial promoter. Certainly, as William Innes Homer points out, Brigman appealed to Stieglitz's ideals; she was a self-taught amateur who made photographs for the love of it and sought no commercial success. And she remained loyal to him long after many photographers had become fed up with his egocentrism.[53]

However, beyond valuing Brigman's loyalty, Stieglitz's behavior suggested that her manipulated photographs were in fact particularly prudent to his cause. Rather than overlook her tinkering with negatives he welcomed some of her techniques. While Stieglitz disapproved of her bromide printing and encouraged her to adopt platinum printing, which was in favor with serious photographers, he did not discourage her from altering her negatives.[54] Brigman wrote Stieglitz, "You have never said a word, yea or nay, about my free use of pencil and graver."[55] In fact, in *Camera Work* and elsewhere he defended her against criticism for altering her negatives and staging her photographs, even stating that her "manipulation on the negatives [was] some times necessary."[56] By stating that handwork was integral to Brigman's process, Stieglitz indicated that overt hand techniques had a place in his emerging definition of modernist photography.

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[53] William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1983), 130-131.

[54] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, 104.

[55] Anne Brigman to Alfred Stieglitz, Sept 10, 1907, quoted in Pyne, 104.

[56] "Our Illustrations," *Camera Work,* no. 38 (April 1912), 22; Additionally, in 1909 Stieglitz wrote: "In order to correct a false impression that has gone abroad, we might add that these negatives are *not* produced in a "studio fitted up with papier-maché trees and painted backgrounds." "Our Illustrations," *Camera Work,* no. 25 (January 1909): 48; Stieglitz also defended Brigman from allegations of "artistic monkeying with the plates." See Anne Brigman, "Just A Word," *Camera Craft* 15, no. 3 (March 1908): 87-88, cited in Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, 104.

Brigman's appearance in *Camera Work* in 1912 only seems ill-fitting when viewing her photographs in hindsight according to a definition of straight photography introduced with Strand's 1917 photographic debut.[57] According to this point of view the inclusion of Brigman seems like an anomaly because it appears to be a regression toward earlier versions of pictorialism that featured overtly staged allegorical imagery. However it is unlikely that Stieglitz would have risked the tarnish to his reputation posed by such a backslide during the months leading up to and following the Armory Show when he was determined to reinforce 291's reputation at the center of modern art in New York. He rolled out a sequence of exhibitions designed to both educate and shock the public, including exhibitions of his own photographs, children's artwork, and African objects meant to educate the public on important aspects of modern art missing from the Armory Show.[58] Furthermore, while the overt staging, manipulation, and allegory of Brigman's images might seem to twenty-first century viewers to conjure female pictorialists such as Käsebier, her work would have appeared strikingly different to her contemporary audience. Where Käsebier's allegorical photographs focused on mannered themes of Victorian womanhood such as motherhood and virtuousness, Brigman boldly photographed herself nude and entwined within the craggy untamed wilderness of the American West.

The exhibition of her hand-altered nudes was calculated by Stieglitz to shock the Photo-Secessionists (who were steadfast in their resistance to manipulated photographs) as well as to educate the public about the relationship between photography and modern art. In introducing her work Stieglitz guided his readers to recall Brigman's debut in a

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[57] For discussion of Strand's 1917 photographs in *Camera Work* see introduction.

[58] Greenough, *Modern Art and America*, 47-51.

1909 edition of the journal where he had paired her photographs with an article comparing Matisse and dancer Isadora Duncan. This indicated that her 1912 appearance in the journal was strategically timed to supply context for the concurrent exhibition of Matisse's sculpture and drawings at 291.[59] The 1909 article by Caffin compared Duncan's "primitive" dance that was as "old as the world" to the "elemental primitive feeling" in Matisse's paintings.[60] The Stieglitz Circle was captivated by Duncan's embodiment of themes of female sexuality and primitivity, which they regarded as central to their emerging conceptions of modernism.[61] Wearing merely a loosely fitting tunic and moving to unconventional music such as Wagner, Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, and Chopin, Duncan undulated, ran, and skipped upon the stage, demonstrating that her body was neither repressed by nor mechanical. For Stieglitz and other modernists, she represented the freedom of women from both repressive Victorian sexuality and the mechanizations of industrialization. On the one hand she personified the ideals of the New Woman; she was both the agent and embodied medium of her own emancipation from social strictures. On the other hand, she quelled male fears about the independence of women by embodying a sexual emancipation that seemed to ensure that women's emancipation would be in line with male desire.[62] In this male modernist version of the New Woman, the emancipation of women was one of eroticism and primitive sexuality thought to belong innately to women. The rhythm of Duncan's freely moving limbs and body

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[59] "Our Illustrations," *Camera Work,* no. 38, 22; Stieglitz often used *Camera Work* as a means to contextualize the exhibitions at 291.

[60] Charles Caffin, "Henri Matisse and Isadora Duncan," *Camera Work,* no. 25, 17-20.

[61] Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, 85-92.

[62] Elizabeth Francis, "From Event to Monument: Modernism, Feminism and Isadora Duncan," *American Studies* 35, no. 1 (Spring, 1994): 25-28.

unmoored from brassiere and corset was believed to convey a return "back to the very morning of the world;" a time "when men and women danced before their gods and their hearthstones in religious ecstacy [sic], or out in the forests, and by the sea, because of the joy of life that was in them, it had to be that every strong, great or good impulse of the human soul poured from the spirit to the body in perfect accord with the rhythm of the universe."[63] Stieglitz imagined that he had found in Brigman's wilderness nudes the photographer equivalent of Duncan.[64] Even though Brigman herself did not advocate for this interpretation of modern womanhood, her photographs seem to have been used by Stieglitz to uphold male fantasy of a feminism that dovetailed with primitivist modern art.

Brigman's use of her own body as subject matter and handwork upon her own photographs enhanced the idea that she was comparable to Duncan. She was both the agent and the medium of her emancipation.[65] Though Brigman explored several different themes during the years that Stieglitz published and exhibited her work, Stieglitz only selected her nudes set within "the heart of the wilds of California."[66] In April 1912 *Camera Work* opened with *The Cleft of the Rock* (figure 51, 1905), a photograph of Brigman emerging nude from a crevice between rocks as if being born from earthen vulva. Brigman's illumined flawless white body materializing from within the dark unknown called to mind the dawn of time. Her hands on each side of the rock formation

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[63] Mary Fanton Roberts, Introduction to Isadora Duncan, *The Dance* (New York: The Forest Press, 1909), 5.

[64] Pyne makes this connection between Duncan and Brigman. Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, 85-92.

[65] For a discussion of Brigman's views on feminism and womanhood see Pyne, 81-82, 99-113.

[66] "Our Illustrations," *Camera Work*, no. 25, 48.

Figure 52. *Bonheur de Vivre*, by Henri Matisse, 1905.

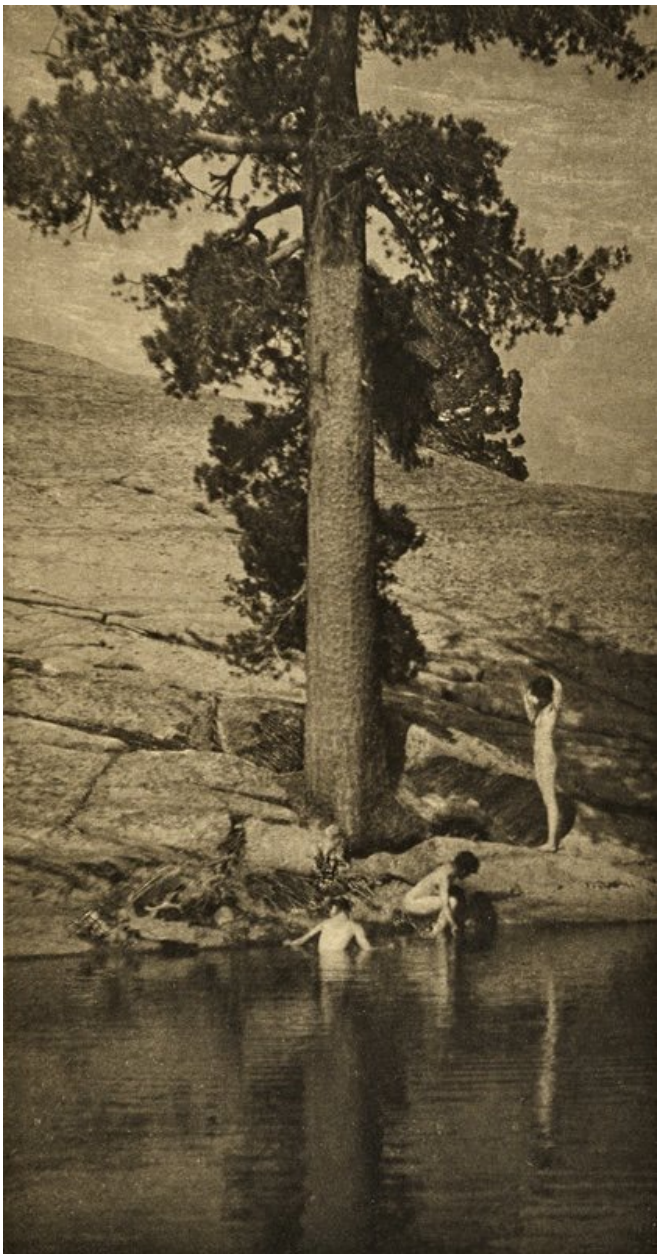

Figure 53. *The Pool*, by Anne Brigman, 1906.

evoked a tactile and erotic relationship with the earth. Brigman added striations to both the rock and flesh, extending the erotic touch of the hands upon the stone to the surface of the image itself. Brigman's crude handwork was an act of liberation from the confines of the conventions of the medium, and thus civilization itself.

By drawing a relationship between Brigman, Duncan and Matisse, Stieglitz also encouraged viewers to see her work through ideas of primordial whiteness. Matisse's paintings were described in *Camera Work* as expressing "the Pagan Spirit in art" that showed the "delirious delight of touch" and "the materializing of sensuousness."[67] Matisse's *Bonheur de Vivre* (figure 52, 1905) was interpreted as depicting a primitive pleasure of earthen bodily enjoyment.[68] Set within a naively rendered Arcadian landscape Matisse's figures move without inhibition, lounging, squatting, dancing, playing music, and touching each other erotically. Such movements are mirrored by some of the figures in Brigman's *The Pool* (figure 53, 1906) who crouch, swim, and stretch as they enjoy the pristine California wilderness. Stieglitz related these movements to the "great primitive joy of living" expressed by Duncan who tossed aside civilized conventions of movement in order to move her "body in perfect accord with the rhythm of the universe."[69] This was a white primitivity believed to belong to the ancient Greeks who "knew and expressed [the] wonderful secrets of universal rhythm."[70] White primitivity was conceptualized as a perfect embodied comprehension of the totality of existence, which

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[67] Benjamin de Casseres, "Rodin and the Eternality of the Pagan Soul," *Camera Work* 34-35 (April - July, 1911): 13.

[68] *Bonheur de Vivre* was exhibited at 291 in 1910 and published in *Camera Work,* special number (August 1912); William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-Garde,* 60; On Brigman's appeal to Stieglitz's ideals see Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession*, 130.

[69] Roberts, Introduction to Isadora Duncan, *The Dance* (New York: The Forest Press, 1909), 5.

[70] Roberts, *The Dance,* 5.

produced a state of ceaseless happiness. The frequent descriptions of such primitivity as the "Pagan Soul," expressed the belief that such a state of being had preceded the spread of Christianity, yet remained alive as a dormant interiority within modern whites—one which could be rekindled as "a rebellion against dogmas, codes, conventions, dry-rot morality and the professional instinct"—stripping away modern artifice, restraint, and mechanization.[71]

Paganism was thought to be closely related to the naiveté that appeared in women's and children's art. Such art was crude, but also innocent and pure. It represented an intimate relationship of the body to nature not yet tainted by Christianity's strictures. Matisse was described as a "wide-eyed child," indicating an innocent perception of the world.[72] Matisse's primitivism was described in *Camera Work* in terms of children's art. Caffin perceived his paintings as if they had been "drawn in with the lines of the brush, very crudely as it seems, almost like a child's handling of the brush."[73] To educate—and perhaps surprise—the public about the merits of Matisse's naiveté, Stieglitz followed the 1912 Matisse exhibition with *Exhibition of Drawings, Water-Colors, and Pastels by Children, Aged Two to Eleven.* Haviland explained, "The object of the exhibition was to gather examples of graphic art produced at an age when education has not yet interfered with naive and natural expression."[74] Publishing Brigman's photographs to coincide with the closing of the Matisse exhibition and the opening of the children's art exhibition, Stieglitz educated his audience about the breadth of primitivism—with representative

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[71] De Casseres, "Rodin and the Eternality of the Pagan Soul," 13-14.

[72] Charles DeKay, "Matisse—Sculptor?—'Mazette'!" *American Art News,* reprinted in *Camera Work*, no. 38, 46.

[73] Caffin, "Henri Matisse and Isadora Duncan," 17.

[74] Paul B. Haviland, "Photo-Secession Notes," *Camera Work,* no. 38, 47.

artworks by man, woman, and child. Brigman's obvious hand alterations emphasized that she was of a cloth with the "Pagan" primitivism of Matisse, Duncan, and the child artists. Hand alterations of photographs would have associated Brigman with women snapshooters of the turn of the century who, responsible for maintaining family photo albums, commonly cut family snapshots with scissors, collaged them together, and drew upon their surfaces.[75] Manipulations of photographs that would have otherwise been unacceptable were in Brigman's case believed to be the naive products of a woman artist who appeared not to understand refined art conventions of art photography.

Though Brigman's artwork exhibited important links to European modernism, it also made legible how the racial notions of primitivism were translated in the United States to fit settler colonial ideology. Brigman's frequent descriptions of herself as a "Pagan" stemmed from her belief that she had grown up in the West as a wild and free "young savage." She was born in Hawaii to missionary parents in 1869 and moved to Oakland, California at the age of sixteen. Both California and Hawaii were central to her sense of self as an untamed pagan. In her memoirs Brigman described herself as a "child of the tropics" whose innocent senses were "primed to the brim with the zest of living" by the odors and sounds of an island whose natural order was "as old as Time."[76] While living in Oakland her sense of herself as a savage had gone dormant until 1906 when hiking for the first time in the northern Sierra Nevada mountains where she "ate and

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[75] For discussion of women maintaining domestic photo collections see Catherine Zuromskis, *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013), 55; For a discussion of alterations to snapshot photographs in the early twentieth century, see Stephanie Snyder and Barbara Levine, *Snapshot Chronicles: Inventing the American Photo Album* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006).

[76] Anne Brigman, *Songs of a Pagan* (unpublished), dated July 30, 1939, 1-2. YCAL.

slept with the earth."[77] She described the centuries-old pines of the High Sierras as awakening a "stored consciousness" that inspired her to begin making nudes and altering her negatives.[78] The narrative in which she situated her work thus conceptualized that the ancientness of the American wilderness had nurtured in her a selfhood and aesthetic perception continuous with that of her own uncivilized pagan ancestors whose "consciousness" lay dormant within her even during the time she lived in the City of Oakland. Such fantasies of temporality exemplify aspects of "settler time." As Lorenzo Veracini describes, "Settlers construe their very movement forward as a 'return' to something that was irretrievably lost: a return to the land, but also a return to an Edenic condition, to a Golden Age of unsurrendered freedoms."[79] At the farthest reach of the American settlement, extending into territories not yet annexed, Hawaii and California paradoxically represented for Americans both the newest of frontiers and also the unspoiled beginnings of a primordial American past, where whites could "return" to a spiritual relationship to their "ancestral" lands.[80]

The landscapes that Brigman described fondly as nurturing her "primitive" femininity were also ones where "savagery" was actively being wiped out by American settlers. Brigman's family moved to Hawaii with the first groups of American Christian missionaries in the 1820s. They witnessed more than half of the native Hawaiian

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[77] Anne Brigman, *Songs of a Pagan*, 1-2.

[78] Anne Brigman, 1-2.

[79] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 98.

[80] Though Hawaii would not be annexed to the United States, until 1898, the American missionaries had begun the process of establishing political power on the islands by becoming active in political and commercial affairs, converting Hawaii to a Christian monarchy. Joy Schulz, *Hawaiian by Birth: Missionary Children, Bicultural Identity, and U.S. Colonialism in the Pacific* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 1-17.

population die of European-introduced diseases by 1852. These deaths went hand-in-hand with the missionaries' efforts, as the missionaries began to declare that annexation to the United States was inevitable in the face of waves of death and growth of the white population in both number and political power. Missionary children began to ascend into the ranks of political and economic power, preparing the islands for future annexation.[81]

This same period also saw the near decimation of the indigenous populations of the Sierra Nevadas. Indigenous civilians whose homelands became settlers' gold fields—the Miwok, Washoe, Maidu, and Nisenan—were both systematically and

[81] Native Hawaiians expressed the sense that as their people were dying of diseases, the population of missionary children continued to grow, and as they grew older increasingly took positions of power as if they were "inheriting the land" vacated by death. Schulz, *Hawaiian by Birth*, 8, 38-39, 56-57.

indiscriminately slaughtered.[82] The very landscape that awakened Brigman's inner-primitive was one marked by Indigenous lives and deaths. Brigman recalled hiking to some of the highest and most remote areas of the Sierras, indicating that she may have also encountered the land of the Shoshone-Paiutes, some of the last indigenous civilians to remain in the Sierras because of their homelands' inaccessibility. Not only had they just recently been killed and driven out of their homelands, but the visual contours she admired were in fact the result of centuries of ecomanagement of forests, vegetation, and

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82 The Maidu, Washo, Nisenan, and Miwok all lived in areas in and around the northern Sierra Nevada where Brigman likely hiked. Many Maidu and Miwok were enslaved and murdered by the Spanish before California's annexation to the United States. Slaughter of Indians by Americans was first documented in the Sierras by the military during the American invasion of the territory during 1847 and by American settlers as early as 1848, months after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The gold fields where mining took place in the mid-nineteenth century were largely in the homelands of the Miwok and Nisenan in the western Sierras. During the first six months of the California gold rush, Maidu and Nisenan often aided, joined, and worked for settlers, and were thus not initially murdered. With the arrival of thousands more settlers seeking gold, systematic and indiscriminate murder of indigenous civilians resulted in genocide, and resulted in the normalizing of killing indigenous Californians. Gold miners would aim to "teach [Indians] a lesson" by massacring entire villages in one morning, arriving after dawn and cornering the entire population until they surrendered, and murdering every single person. Wherever new gold fields opened, Indians were regarded as competition and murders increased near the new gold fields. Miners also destroyed Indian's traditional means of subsistence. In one attack on a village in the high Sierras, Canadian gold miner William Perkins wrote that his posse surprise-attacked a group of more than one hundred Indian structures, setting fire to all of their goods and possessions, then repeated the process at two more villages in the following days, intentionally destroying their lives by decimating their means of livelihood. He wrote, "We invade a land that is not our own; we arrogate a right through pretense of superior intelligence and the wants of civilization, and if the aborigines dispute our truths, we destroy them!" Miners also killed indigenous civilians for sport. In 1851, leaders from 119 California tribes signed treaties giving up their land in exchange for protection, clothing, blankets, food, education, and 11,700 acres of reservation land. However, California settlers largely opposed the allotment of reservation land to the Indians and one year later the treaties were repudiated. An 1853 treaty reduced the reservation lands to one-sixtieth of their original proposal and denied them protection from invasion by whites, granting legal impunity to kidnapping, slavery, assault, and murder, often at the hands of state militia. 1863 saw the Konkow Maidu Trail of Tears, in which the California Clavary marched 461 Konkow Maidu off of their homelands, with several hundred dying en route. In 1861-1869, the Paiute-Shoshone (the remaining tribes still living in the Sierras) were forced out and murdered by military and vigilantes. The last recorded major massacre of California indigenous civilians took place in the northern Sierras near Mill Creek in 1871. See Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1373* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 21-335.

waterways.[83] Brigman's "stored consciousness" of her pagan roots was an imagined fantasy of her own ancestors' living with the rhythms of nature that was unmistakably out of sync with the history of her settler predecessors presence on those lands. That Brigman was born on the heels of vast cultural destruction and genocidal campaigns, yet imagined herself in untouched wildernesses infused with joyful white primitivity demonstrates the swift and normalizing force of settler ideology to inscribe the landscape with narratives of white virtuosity.

Synchronous with the genocide of the Sierra Nevada's indigenous civilians, Manifest Destiny visual culture played a critical role in encouraging Americans to seek pleasure in the mountains. During the mid-nineteenth century artists, writers, and photographers widely disseminated notions of the Sierras—particularly Yosemite—as an American sacred site.[84] Albert Bierstadt depicted Yosemite and surrounding areas of the Sierras as an Eden, where white settlers could witness the presence of a Christian God. These studio-conceived paintings (figure 54, 1868) combined gentle Arcadian landscapes with sublime wondrous mountains bathed in the dramatic divine light of a Christian heaven.[85] Meanwhile writers described Yosemite's geological formations as "natural

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[83] The Paiute-Shoshones built dams and canals to channel water to plants they harvested and animals they hunted. Madley, *American Genocide,* 309; Archeologists document that indigenous populations of the Sierra Nevadas and other areas of California used controlled burns to manage the forests. Terry Jones, Erika Zavaleta, Melissa C. Chapin, *Ecosystems of California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016). 179-180. The Paiute fought and suffered many clashes with settlers and the United States military and were interned in a concentration camp following the 1878 Bannock War. See Sarah Winnemucca, *Life Among the Paiutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (Boston: Cupples, Upham & Co., 1883).

[84] John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 122-128.

[85] Katherine Manthorne, "Painting the Rockies, Invoking the Alps: American Artists and Their Romance with Mountains," in *The Rockies and the Alps: Bierstadt, Calame, and the Romance of the Mountains*, Katherine Manthorne and Tricia Laughlin Bloom (Newark: Newark Museum, 2018), 102-105.

Figure 54. *Among the Sierra Nevada,* by Albert Bierstadt, 1868.

Figure 55. *Soul of the Blasted Pine*, by Anne Brigman, 1908.

cathedrals" and compared them to ancient Egyptian temples.[86] Portraying the newly-annexed California settlement as a "return" to a land of lost spiritual freedoms, such visual culture encouraged settlers to follow in the footsteps of genocide as tourists retrieving their divine birthright. Because the appropriation of lands is the core goal of settler projects, ideological constructions of sacred birthrights frequently appear in settler cultures.[87] A professed sacred relationship to America as the Christian Promised Land was central to the American settler project from its earliest days.[88] Additionally, by describing land as part of a common past, such settler myths often fabricated a sense of belonging amongst settlers by proposing a spiritual or inborn relationship they shared to occupied territory.[89] Falsified notions of time and religiosity thus gave the impression of a virtuous rather than murderous settlement, one where Indians had disappeared by the grace of God or surrendered due to their natural inferiority.[90] The California wilderness became an exemplary site for this settler temporal logic, imagined as if the landscape itself were American's cultural heritage. As John F. Sears argues, that civilized Americans could appreciate Yosemite's God-made scenery *as art* served as justification for their occupation of indigenous territory—believing Indians to be heathens incapable of awe appreciation, and therefore undeserving of the very lands they had purposefully cultivated for thousands of years.[91]

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[86] Sears, *Sacred Places*, 140, quoting John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (Boston: Dana Estes, 1880), IV, 464, 299.

[87] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 46.

[88] For a discussion of American's religious associations with the landscape see Sears, *Sacred Places*, 4-7.

[89] Cavanagh and Veracini, *Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, 6.

[90] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 41-42.

[91] Sears, *Sacred Places,* 149-155.

If visual culture encouraging whites to see American virtue in the Sierras circulated simultaneously with acts genocide and dispossession, settler "amnesia" is not a result of the passage of time. It is not a matter of forgetting. Settler amnesia is instead a constant and ongoing condition of settler consciousness that overwrites the present with the temporal logic of settler time. Indigenous populations are perpetually relegated to a past beyond conscious awareness while settler history appears everywhere as an unbroken evolution from a utopian ancient past to a modern utopian future. When turning to twentieth-century American visual culture, one cannot say that modernism is too far removed from acts of genocide; that white Americans had moved on to other matters. This myth repeats the logic of settler time: settlers appear engaged in their own isolated chronicle, with Indians impossibly beyond the reach of memory. Modernism winds the watch of settler time, refreshing the perception that Indigenous grievances are irrelevant.

Accordingly Brigman's settler primitivist representations of the Sierras not only mark a defiant break from iconography like Bierstadt's, but also amount to a new face of the settler colonial fantasy. Brigman's intentions, parallel to those of the European primitivists, had sincere merits. Each group desired to break free of the dogmas and conventions of white society, and for Brigman, from patriarchal society. She described her backpacking trips to the Sierras with other woman hikers, "living a hearty out-of-door life in high boots and jeans, toughened to wind and sun… cooking for weeks over a camp-fire," and "grow[ing] into new dimensions of body and thought, selfless and unafraid."[92] Brigman's description aimed to emphasize that she and her friends experienced newfound freedoms and personal transformation in the Sierras away from the company of men and the strictures of femininity. Her artwork was born of the

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[92] Brigman, *Songs of a Pagan*, 2-3. (Elipses in the original text.)

transcendent self-transformation she experienced during her expeditions. She describes rough and "hearty, unaffected women" experiencing camaraderie with each other and the natural world.[93] Despite Stieglitz's impression that Brigman represented the assurances that the New Woman's sexuality was in line with male desire, Brigman seems to have had more feminist aims.[94] By inscribing the Sierra landscape with her idea of a primitive femininity, Brigman certainly rebelled against her own Christian upbringing and prior Christian iconography for depicting the Sierras as an American Eden. For instance, Brigman's *Soul of the Blasted Pine* (figure 55, 1908) was removed from an art exhibition in Oakland because it was too "vulgar" for the exhibition's middle-class viewers.[95] The photograph pictures a nude white woman emerging from the stump of a recently-deceased pine tree, whose fallen trunk lays upon the ground behind her. For the curators it was likely the unconventional setting for a nude in a harsh landscape devoid of gentle Arcadian iconography, that appeared vulgar, and out of step with the Sierra's status as the God-given art of the nation. However, the photograph is consistent with the settler amnesia characteristic of prior representations of the Sierras. The title suggests that the nude is the apparition of the tree's own soul. Her theatrical posture with head thrown back and arm raised suggest her total empathy with the tree's plight—a difficult life on a barren rocky outcrop where it finally met a lonely fatal end. This intense performance of

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[93] Brigman, 2-3.

[94] On Brigman's views of feminism see Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, 97-100; Additionally, Brigman's feminism aligned with what Matthew Crow notes, "marshal[led] a rhetoric of embodied and intellectual self-possession and capacity for self-direction that purposefully played on the implicit promises of the settler identity at the heart of American politics." Crow, "Atlantic North America," 105.

[95] Robert W. Edwards, Jennie V. Cannon: The Untold History of the Carmel and Berkeley Art Colonies, vol. 1 (Oakland: East Bay Heritage Project, 2012), 92.

Figure 56. *Dawn*, by Anne Brigman, 1908.

Figure 57. *Finis*, by Anne Brigman, 1908.

empathy for the death of a single tree contrasts distastefully to the massacre of the Indians who cared for the Sierra's trees for thousands of years.

America primitivist modernism's strong emphasis on women's innate relationship to nature dovetailed with Americans' already-established sense of identification with the landscape. *The Cleft of the Rock,* for instance, pictures Brigman's own awakening to "new dimensions" of selfhood as a birth from a womb within the Sierras. It proposes an ancient tie between the American wilderness and modern white women's newfound freedoms to embody the true nature "stored" in their "consciousness." For Brigman the spirit of Earth itself, rather than a patriarchal Christian God, confirmed that the American land was her birthright. This representational shift in depicting the Sierras demonstrates the adaptation of settler ideology to new historical realities and factions that arise within the colony. As Veracini points out, at the core of the distinction between colonists and settler colonists is the fact that settlers never go home, requiring the continual renewal of invented narratives that explain why the settler remains on stolen lands.[96] The visual iconography of landscape art—seemingly neutral depictions of anodyne scenery—thus becomes a mode for re-imagining each era's fated and blameless relationship to American territory.

Brigman's photographic techniques—"with free use of pencil and graver"—inscribed the Sierra Nevada landscape with settler primitivism.[97] Brigman described her artistic process as the result of the awakening of an ancient interiority within her that gave her "flashes of visualization" of the "human form as part of tree and rock rhythms" that could materialize photographically by turning "full force to the medium at hand"

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[96] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 2-7.

[97] Brigman to Stieglitz, September 10, 1907.

with "power and abandon."[98] Such visions were realized in photographs that appeared in *Camera Work* 38, such as *Dawn* (figure 56, 1908) and *Finis* (figure 57, 1908). Brigman's narrative indicates that the contact of the female body that appears in the images materialized first as a vision that erupted from her own embodied contact with the Sierra's landscape, where she "ate and slept with the Earth." Her visions compelled her to pose or ask her hiking companions to pose for her in the surrounding scenery. In *Dawn,* the hour-glass figure of the nude form appears to be a continuation of the rocky crest of a mountain ridge. Unlike *Cleft in the Rock* in which the figure's nude white skin contrasts sharply to the dark rocks, in *Dawn* the figure is placed in silhouette allowing her skin to fall into a shadow that blends more harmoniously with the rock face. Together, body and ridge, echo the forms of distant ridges and cloud banks. Further resonance between foreground and background is emphasized by a distant lake that mirrors the small pool below the nude, as well as by the nude's outstretched hand that appears to delicately touch the rising sun with the tips of her fingers. The hand's placement above the sun creates the illusion that the woman's magnetic feminine touch has effortlessly drawn the sun into the morning sky. The contact between nude and sun gives the title of the image —*Dawn*—its allegorical meaning. The image does not stand as a record of a particular morning that happened in the summer of 1908, but stands instead for a timeless relationship between woman and nature, in which the woman's true nature powers the circadian rhythms of life on Earth.

However, as Brigman's narrative also indicates, the careful control of exposure and composition were not enough to realize her flash of visualization. Brigman has

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[98] Brigman, *Songs of a Pagan*, 1-2; Anne Brigman, "Awareness," *Design for Arts in Education* 38 (June 1936): 17-18. Quoted in Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*, 70-71.

scratched lines on the rock faces, trees, and body, making them appear as if they are made of the same fabric. The scratches give the forms a similar texture and unify them in waves of movement across the composition, further emphasizing their relationship with each other. Because such formal relationships would have been evident without the overt manipulation of the negative, Brigman's insistence upon such additions and even Stieglitz's admission that it was necessary, begs the question: What meaning emerges from these marks that would otherwise be absent? These marks are not the stuff of straightforward empirical vision that can be recorded with the camera, but instead picture Brigman's hallucination. As such they do not suggest a hallucination that is a total figment of the imagination, but a hallucination as the primitive "sensation" that expresses her total immersion in the landscape. The multiplication of levels of touch—photographer and earth, nude and earth, photographer and negative—realizes Bergson, Galton, and James's theories of "primitive" and civilized vision in which women, children, and racialized subjects sense the world from a place embedded within it; where touch and sight are not separated into discreet categories, but result in illusions that appear in the mind as visual facts. That Brigman insists her manipulations are within modernism's medium-specificity—a "full force" use of "the medium at *hand*" (my emphasis)—is revealing. At the time of photography's invention, it was closely associated with touch. Early descriptions of photographs stated that the physical light that touched the subject had touched the photographic plate, resulting one's features being "caught and stamped with a vigor and similitude" onto a "drawing" that "nature… delineated

herself."[99] Brigman's hand thus reaches fully into the medium of photography, multiplying and emphasizing the aspect of touch in order to make the primitive female sensation of the real appear in the photograph.

Typical of Brigman's imagery, *Dawn* suggests that a pagan female relationship to nature is one synchronized to Earth's rhythms. Brigman's hand marks stress the idea of rhythm and the fit and resonance of the white female body with natural elements. Like Duncan's dance, Brigman's "primitive" white body expressed the "joy in the sun, the wind and the rain, in the motion of trees and waves, in the beauty of blue hilltops and fragrant flowers, found the expression it was meant to have from the beginning."[100] Brigman's nude body is a body unencumbered by the labors involved with living in nature in order to eat, stay warm, and maintain protection from the elements. Though settler primitivism suggested that Brigman's visualizations of women's fit with nature manifested from a latent ancestral knowledge that was more real than straightforward empirical vision, it was in reality a impractical fantasy of leisure time spent frolicking carelessly in nature.

That whites might perceive such fantasies as an expression of an intuited memory of the past serves to emphasize their distance from ancestral knowledge regarding life in nature—particularly that in the American territory. In *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance,* Indigenous scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson uses the Nishnaabeg word "kobade" to speak about intergenerational knowledge of nature. "Kobade" refers to the link that holds generations together—ancestors to the

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[99] "Extraordinary Chemical and Optical Discovery." *Boston Mercantile Journal* 4, no. 441 (February 26, 1839): 121; "Daguerreotype Miniatures," *Niles National Register* (May 30, 1840): 1. Both cited in Marcy J. Dinius, *The Camera and the Press: American Visual and Print Culture in the Age of the Daguerreotype* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 17-27.

[100] Roberts, *The Dance,* 5.

living and to future generations. The links of kobade, however, also tie people to plants, animals, geological formations, the cosmos, and neighboring communities.[101] Kobade is not merely a metaphor, but a place-based lived relationship of people to each other and their homelands. In contrast to the colonial fantasy of the opposite poles of "intellect" and "intuition," Simpson discusses kobade as intergenerational networked intellectual traditions of Indigenous intelligence. In Nishnaabeg cultures, ancestral knowledge is held in elders' bodies as a walking historical knowledge of their land's trap lines, hunting grounds, berry patches, locations of medicinal plants. Walking to these sites constitutes an intergenerational exchange of both information and Indigenous philosophies about life. It enacts the kobade's links between body, land, and community as an intellectual tradition regarding the care for each other through generations materially, emotionally, and spiritually.[102] For Simpson it is the continual maintenance over time of these embodied intellectual traditions for "liv[ing] fused to the land in a vital way" that lie at the heart of Indigenous resistance to the settler colonialism and the "confines of Western thought," allowing future generations to "return to [them]selves" and become liberated from settler belief systems.[103]

Simpson's account offers a striking distinction to the idea that ancestral knowledge might be simply awakened as a stored consciousness in a flash of vision. Ancestors for the Nishnaabeg are not imagined fantasies, but the deceased kin who

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[101] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 8. Nishnaabeg, or Anishnaabeg, meaning "the people" refers to Indigenous people residing in modern-day Canada and United States who speak languages belonging to the Algonquian language family. See Basil H. Johnston, *Anishinaubae Thesaurus* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), s.v. "Anishnaabeg."

[102] Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, 11-17.

[103] Simpson, 13-14, 17-20.

nurtured the attractiveness of a hunting spot for the game one eats for dinner tonight or directed a waterway towards a berry patch that yields berries this summer. These ancestral acts constitute a lived intellectual inheritance that reveal how Galton and James's studies of Indigenous peoples distinctly misunderstood the perceptions they mistook for inexplicable "intuitive" knowledge and hallucinatory sensations. Simpson's description also offers a distinction to settler time. In contrast to the paradoxical overlapping temporality in which an Edenic past appears as Americans' destiny in the present-day Sierras, is the long view of intergenerationally-linked time: the gradual routing of waterways and controlled burning of forests and countless acts of daily life that enact a practical relationship to prior and future generations across time. This Indigenous temporality is also fundamentally place-based in that it weaves the passage of time to particular sites on the land. This Indigenous perspective makes crystal clear how fantasmatic settler visual cultures of the Sierras truly are: superimposing first Christian, and then pagan imaginary utopian pasts onto a landscape to which such cultures had no lived historical memory. Despite primitivists' intention to create distance from the strictures of white society, Brigman's work instead demonstrates how settler primitivism worked at odds with that intention by reinventing modes for enacting the settler fantasy of an untroubled relationship with purloined territory.

As one of the few women artists appearing on Stieglitz's roster, Brigman's work instead makes apparent the importance of gender to the racial essentialism of American primitivist modernism. Constructions of gender necessarily go hand in hand with race, as the naturalization of complimentary heterosexual gender roles are requisite to the reproduction of a race (believed to be a biological, rather than social fact).[104] Since settler

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[104] Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997), [60-94.]

colonial cultures portray their temporal and spatial "return" as a restoration of "natural" and less complicated gender roles, American modernist primitivism's celebration of instinctive female sexuality certainly gave energy to belief about innate white heteronormativity. As Haraway argues, feminine representations of nature are coded as the "other half" of masculinized scientific perspectives. They are regarded as the sensually erotic side of the view of nature, imbued with touch, and allowing for deeper penetration into the ecological landscape.[105] During each of the three periods of Stieglitz's career, he championed one woman artist whose work in some regard represented the female counterpart of his own, rounding out the "cause" of art photography with a feminine voice.[106] Accordingly, Brigman was the "other half" of Stieglitz's modernist primitivism.

## Stieglitz: A Primitive Among Skyscrapers

That Brigman's work appeared in *Camera Work* six months following the appearance of *The Steerage* and that Cézanne's work appeared six months prior at 291, offers some sense of the discursive web into which *The Steerage* materialized as a work of art; along with a host of other articles and exhibitions orchestrated by Stieglitz and his circle to engage with the intensifying volume of the dialogue between European and American modernisms: Brigman was the female counterpart of Stieglitz, and Cézanne the

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105 Donna J. Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 136.

106 During the early years of the the Photo-Secession, Stieglitz championed Gertrude Käsebier. After Brigman, he would promote Georgia O'Keeffe and Katherine Rhoades. Pyne, *Modernism and the Feminine Voice*.

European. *The Steerage* appeared in the October 1911 issue of *Camera Work*, which was devoted entirely to Stieglitz's photographs. It was rare for an issue of the magazine to be devoted to only one photographer and Stieglitz's work had not appeared in *Camera Work* since the October 1907 publication of "snapshots" shortly after his return from Europe. The photographs were grouped into thematic pairs and sequences punctuated by articles. Interleaved between the groupings appeared articles on the Unconscious in art, temporality and art, an excerpt from Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, and a defense of 291's controversial painting and sculpture exhibitions. The issue concluded with a reproduction of a charcoal Picasso nude. *The Steerage*'s placement as ninth in the sequence did not indicate that the photograph should be regarded as particularly more important than any of its companions. In fact, his interpretation of the negative for the *Camera Work* gravure suggested to Steichen that Stieglitz did not yet appreciate the potential of the image sufficiently.[107] Regardless of its relative importance to him at that moment, its inclusion in the group demonstrated its fit within his emergent ideas about photography and modernist primitivism.

Overall, the photographs demonstrated a considerable shift in Stieglitz's style, moving toward the sharp, urban style that would soon become associated with modernism and straight photography. Six photographs of New York City opened the magazine. While atmospheric elements such as steam and fog still affected the sharpness of architectural forms, the images were significantly sharper than his previously published views of the city. The most dramatic change, however, was the compositional arrangement of forms within each frame, particularly the inclusion of objects in the foreground. He used the entire frame of the image, from edge to edge. Buildings, dock

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[107] Steichen, *A Life in Photography*, chap. 4.

pilings, and shrubbery butted up to the perimeters of the images, their forms severed by the cut of the frame. Additionally, these foreground objects obstructed a clear view of the scene, detracting attention from any singular subject of the photograph. This distracting quality was often emphasized by visual relationships between similar shapes, such as the painted wooden pilings in the foreground of *The Ferry Boat* (figure 58, 1910) which echo the hats of the ferry passengers in the middle ground. He used pilings similarly in the foreground in *The Mauretania* (figure 59, 1910), this time paralleling the funnels of the famous modern ocean liner beyond. Because of the lens effect that made the pilings appear larger than the ocean funnels, these ordinary and unattractive objects competed for aesthetic prominence with the distant ocean liner, the Mauretania, which was renowned internationally for its large size and its opulent first-class amenities.[108] Such unfamiliar lens effects amounted to what one reviewer called "frankly photographic" due to the inclusion of "large-scale foregrounds, high horizons, and other characteristics peculiar to the lens view."[109] Stieglitz's embrace of the curious effects of photographic vision signaled a decisive pivot away from naturalism and the science of human optics of his early career. It pointed toward a "naive" use of the camera—not only because such effects were more likely to appear as amateurish mistakes in a snapshot than a work of art —but also it suggested the selections of primitive perception. Stieglitz's photographs were both a defiance of Cartesian perspective and a manifestation of what Benjamin de

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[108] The Mauretania was a British ocean liner. At the time of its construction in 1906, it was the largest ocean vessel ever built. Its first class quarters were considered luxurious and ornate with extensive services. F. N. Doubleday, "A Trip on the Two Largest Ships: The Advantages and the Disadvantages of Fast Ships and a Comparison Between the English and the German Service," *The World's Work: A History of Our Time*, vol. 15, eds. Walter Hines Page and Arthur Wilson Page (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1908), 9803-9810.

[109] "New Books," [review] *The British Journal of Photography* 58, no. 2693 (December 11, 1911): 559. YCAL, Series III, box 111, folder 2231.

Figure 58. *The Ferry Boat*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1910.

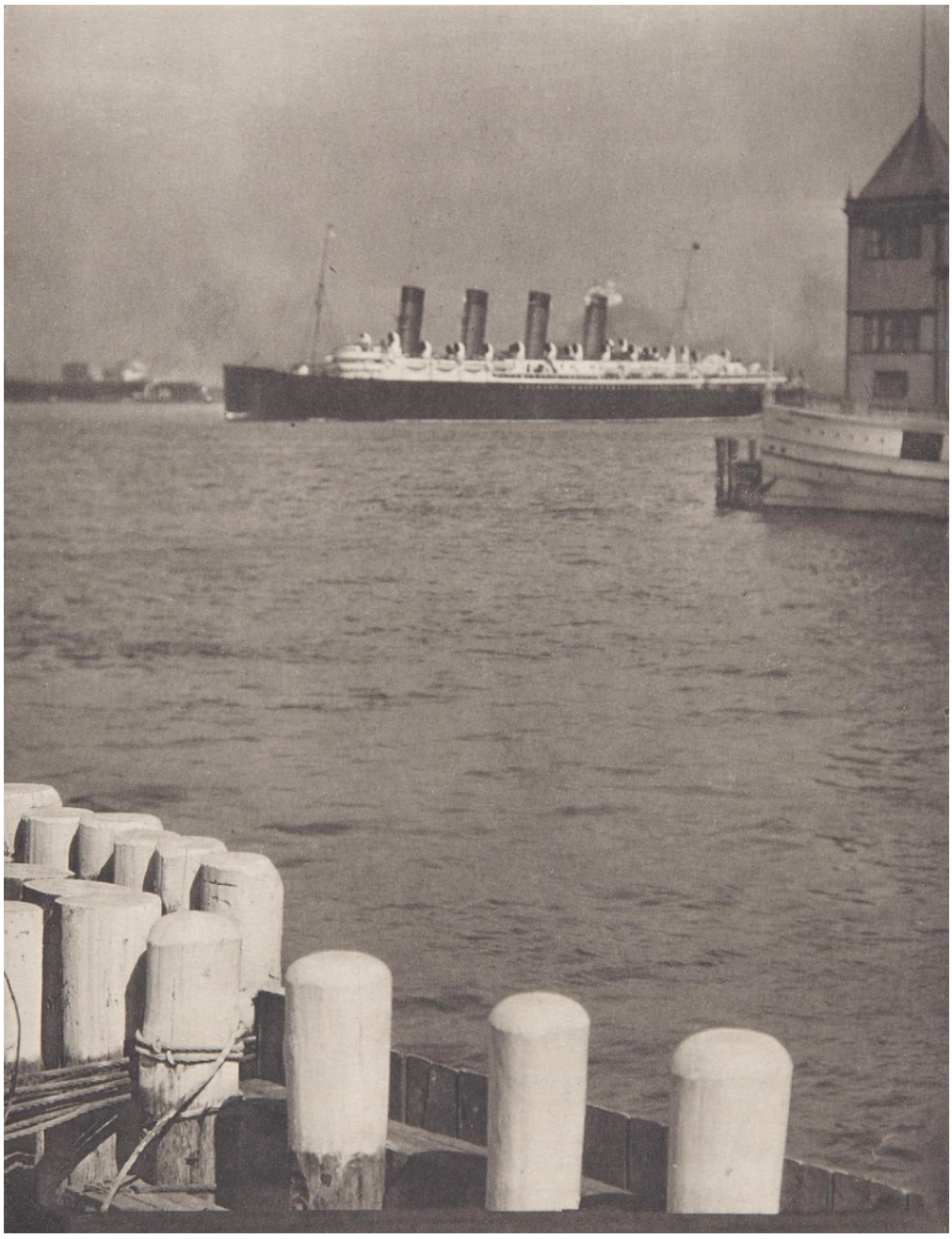

Figure 59. *The Mauretania*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1910.

Casseres called, "the monstrous hallucinations of the Unconscious."[110] Stieglitz did not draw a relationship to European primitivist painting by marking rudely on his photographs as Brigman had, but by layering and fragmenting his subjects.

Furthermore, he remarkably did not try to hide the Americanness of his subject matter as he had with his picturesque work. Instead the unfamiliar photographic effects enhanced the strange newness of skyscrapers—an architectural form unique to the United States and not regarded as fit with the idealizing beauty of fine art. As the reviewer commented, urban forms were "harsh and repellent," making them unfit for "the suavity of classic compositions," but uncommonly suited to the lens, which lent them an "imposing dignity."[111] Alvin Langdon Coburn's accompanying article, "The Relation of Time to Art," explained, "Photography born of this age of steel seems to have naturally adapted itself to the necessary unusual requirements of an art that must live in skyscrapers," making it "the most modern of the arts."[112] Coburn indicated that photography was an art particularly attuned to American urban modernity. Because modern steel-framed skyscrapers were still unique to United States cities, the "age of steel" having not yet reached Europe, Coburn's text upended the usual perception of America as temporally behind Europe. By connecting this advanced modernity to the camera he further proposed that modernist photography in America might be an equal —or even preeminent—counterpart to modernist painting in Europe. The camera, having "naturally adapted" to urban life, was portrayed as a hybrid between machine and organism, which is embedded within life and acts upon "impulse." The claim that the camera was a machine capable of

[110] Benjamin de Casseres, "The Unconscious in Art," *Camera Work* 36, 17.

[111] "New Books," 559.

[112] Alvin Langdon Coburn, "The Relation of Time to Art," *Camera Work* 36 (October 1911), 72.

adaptation and instinct distanced photography from the empiricism of science and linked it instead to Bergson's theory of intuitive "creative evolution." Coburn suggested instead that photography might express something of an urban "instinct" that gave it an unparalleled capacity to capture fleeting moments in a city that constantly moves and changes. He thus guided *Camera Work*'s readers to understand the "frankly photographic" compositions as placing American photography at the vanguard of modern art.

The "frankly photographic" inclusion of foreground objects that appear larger than those in the background linked the visual errors of the camera lens to the embodied sensation of the corporeal subject. The research cited by Galton and James had shown that an educated European male was capable of mentally "correcting" errors of sensation by applying his knowledge to deduce an object's accurate spatial location from the perception that one object appeared larger than another. Such modes of "correction" were also typical in scientific photographs, such as Eadweard Muybridge's motion studies. Muybridge's studies of horses galloping (figure 60, 1878) had famously changed perception about the rise and fall of hooves. In order to yield an accurate spatial and temporal data regarding corporeal movement, Muybridge had used gridded spaces and made every effort to stabilize the viewing position of the camera so that each frame appeared identical to the next for scientific comparison. Of this, Bergson had lamented that, whereas for the human eye a horse's gallop appeared to "radiate over a whole period," photography "isolates any moment" and "puts them all in the same rank," failing to see the true "characteristic" of movement. The camera "sees nothing but phases succeeding phases" and fails to "know" the object of its study.[113] "Correct" vision of the camera therefore came to symbolize the shortfalls of the civilized intellect.

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[113] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 332-333.

The essence of photography for Muybridge was one of mechanized precision. Stieglitz's Manhattan photographs however proposed a different ontology of photography. They called attention to the camera as a mediator of vision by including illusions particular to the apparatus. Stieglitz called attention to the camera's impracticability as a device of objective vision. According to Crary many such photographic illusions were linked to fallible, embodied sight because the viewer was unable to "correct" erroneous vision.[114] The photographic illusion that foreground objects were larger than those in the background thus signified the "monstrous hallucinations" of the uncivilized parts of one's mind. Stieglitz's photographs represented Manhattan as "sensation" in its barest state unencumbered by civilized knowledge and pictorial conventions. His photographs were "real"—"the straightest of the straight"—in their proposed direct contact with "the rush and turmoil of New York," with ocean vessels and people and hansom cabs moving to and fro and buildings rapidly filling the skyline, rather than as documents of the city's mere external surface.[115]

The idea of the snapshot also helped guide Stieglitz's readers to understand his photographs as expressing a particularly intuitive relationship to modernity. As he had done in the 1907, Stieglitz described his own photographs as "snapshots." However, in 1911 the idea of the snapshot linked his photographs to the naiveté of primitivist modernism rather than the sketches of picturesque artists. For Stieglitz, it was no longer a matter of the artist's will wrestling unruly nature into an artwork, resulting in a representational harmony between ideal and real. This new version of the snapshot did not theorize the artist as the idealizing force positioned outside of the real, but as

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[114] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 97-136.

[115] Coburn, "The Relation of Time to Art," 72.

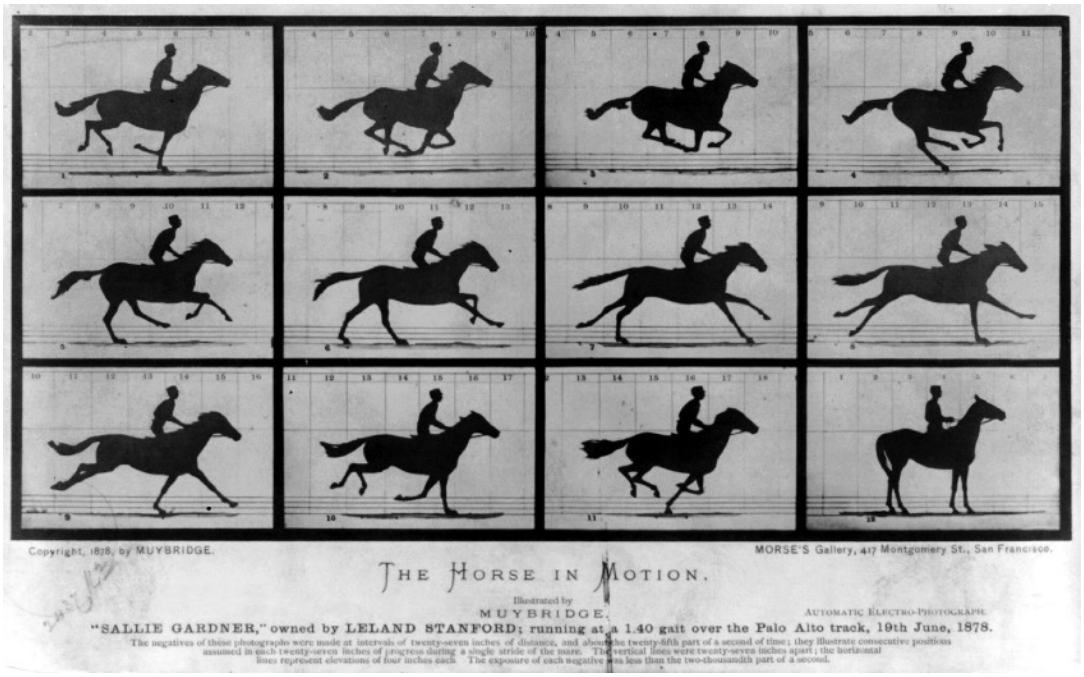


Figure 60. *The Horse in Motion*, by Eadweard Muybridge, 1878.

embedded within the real. The artist did not wrestle nature onto the canvas or into the photograph, but instead developed a lived affinity with his subject matter. The pilings at the foreground of several of the images placed the viewing position of the photographer corporeally within the scene, sensing the ground beneath his feet while watching the ship glide past. This was anything but the gridded measurement of objective observation. The crude errors of focus, composition, and exposure characteristic of snapshots could now be linked to primitive illusions of perception. These errors stood for Stieglitz's sensed corporeal immersion in the scenes he pictured.

This definition of the snapshot dovetailed with meanings promoted by Kodak during the 1910s. Kodak advertised photography primarily as an *activity* rather than a material product. Kodak ads described photography as a vital component of the full experience of one's life, rarely referencing photographs themselves. Photography was linked to leisure time activities believed to enhance one's satisfaction in life. Advertising campaigns such as "Kodak as you go" and "Let Kodak tell the story" promoted the idea that snapshot photography was an activity necessarily embedded within life itself. A "Kodak as you go" ad from the 1910s claimed, "All roads lead to pictures—the quiet lane as surely as the busy highway. With your Kodak tucked beside you, you have only to pick and choose—and press the button" (figure 61, 1910s). The ad pairs photography with driving, a novel new modern experience promoted as a life-enriching activity of agency, independence, new sensations, and exploration. The ad copy suggests that photography and life unfold coterminously when one truly experiences life. Life itself is teeming with photographs. The snapshooter merely chooses which of those photographs to record on film. The hand-colored photograph above the copy shows a woman snapshooter with two male companions by her side. The trio gathers comfortably at the rear of a convertible


Figure 61. "Kodak as you go" advertisement, by Kodak Eastman Company, 1910s.

motorcar gazing at the boat-speckled bay beyond them. The convertible's top-down position signals to the viewer that the group is out on a summery leisurely outing. The woman perches above her male companions, camera at the ready. Coincidentally similar to the Stieglitz series of photographs that opened *Camera Work* 36, wooden pilings stand between the photographer and the water beyond. She appears to contemplate a small red rowboat as the subject for her next snapshot. However each of the men look in other directions. Along with the ad copy, these divergent gazes suggest to the viewer-consumer that pictures lay in wait all around them, and that each person's snapshots result from their particular position and inclination. As Kodak ads from the 1910s frequently stated, snapshots were made "from your own point of view" and recorded your "personal impressions."[116] The triad pictured in the ad enjoys the leisure time of a life lived to the fullest, embedded within a field of infinite possible photographs. Taking snapshots is thus posited as part of the active and unfolding enjoyment of one's life, rather than as the composition of preconceived pictures dictated by convention.

The advertised scene correlates with Stieglitz's photographs of Manhattan made from the New Jersey shore of the Hudson River, with pilings standing between him and the water. His series of photographs likewise suggested that any number of possible photographs existed around the photographer at a given moment. The photographer's selection of which pictures to record was an expression of his rich connection to life unfolding all around him. Parallel to Kodak's messaging, the act of photographing was posited as an act contiguous with the experience of living itself. The unpredictable

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116 For example "Take a Kodak with you," Kodak advertisement, 1913, Box 1, Wayne P. Ellis Collection of Kodakiana, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University (Hereafter Ellis Collection); "The World is mine—I own a Kodak," Ladies Home Journal April 1912, , Box 1, Ellis Collection.

shifting perspective of the camera made evident that the camera occupied the corporeal viewing position of the photographer moving through time and space. Across the opening sequence objects variously appear and disappear from the foreground. With the viewing position and observed subjects apparently in constant motion, the photographs did not offer empirical evidence of a stable reality, but instead gained their relationship to the real as an extension to the photographer's lived experience of the real.

Though it is unlikely that Stieglitz would have consciously drawn upon advertised snapshot ideals, it is important to consider that the Kodak Eastman Company was actively inventing the meaning of snapshot photography through ad campaigns ubiquitous in the visual culture of the early twentieth century. The most frequent message of advertisements at this time was the idea that the camera was something that should be worn at all times, as an extension of one's body or hand. Ads implored "Take a Kodak with you" on "every walk and ride," with illustrations demonstrating that the camera could be worn over the shoulder, dangled from the wrist, or carried in one's pocket (figures 62-63, 1910s). The camera that was constantly "tucked beside you" suggested an altered relationship of the photograph to the real that was not about objectivity or accuracy, but attached to the fallibility of corporeal vision.[117] This corporeal idea of the snapshot would have especially appealed to Stieglitz's evolving conception of primitivist modernism. It suggested that the camera was part of one's own body and therefore one's own sensation and subjective impressions of the world.

*Camera Work* referred to Stieglitz's photographs as "snapshots" twice—once to describe the series of photographs and one daring his critics to call his handheld work

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117 This builds upon Crary's links between photographic and optical technologies and the body. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer,* 118-136, 147-150.



Figures 62-63. "Have your Kodak handy" and "Let Kodak tell the story" advertisements, Kodak Eastman Company, 1910s.

"glorified snapshots." Stieglitz welcomed such disparaging remarks.[118] Should his critics call his work naive and amateurish, his public connection to outcry against primitivist modernism would be further secured. Exclamations that artwork was amateurish was a frequent response to modernist paintings that defied traditions of naturalism and cartesian perspective. By using the term "snapshot" he proposed that his photographs should be counted among the modernist artworks initially perceived to be too primitive for the walls of fine arts institutions. The opening sequence was directly followed by the opening lines of an essay by Benjamin de Casseres: "A work of art that we can understand at sight is mediocre or worse. Genius stirs our ignorance first."[119] Casseres's statement mirrored Stieglitz's own first sight of Cézanne's watercolors—misunderstanding and laughter that signaled his ignorance, followed years later by reverence and emulation. Stieglitz therefore appeared to signal that his own photographs were similar in some regard to the "splashes of color" that he now believed to be equivalent to the "straightest kind of straight photography."[120]

The Stieglitz Circle understood Cézanne's process to indicate the artist's embodied visual perspective upon the scenes around him processed through his particular subjective experience of those scenes. This was a "naive" process in that it was based in primitive sensations, but it was also the product of genius and meditated skillful work to visually interpret his sensations with the careful layering of the planes of reality he sensed around him. The sequence of six photographs that opened *Camera Work* 36 make evident why Stieglitz opened the box of Cézanne watercolors a few months prior

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[118] Coburn, "The Relation of Time to Art," 72.

[119] Benjamin de Casseres, "The Unconscious in Art," *Camera Work* 36 (October 1911): 17.

[120] "Notes on '291'," 19.

Figure 64. *Le Viaduc,* by Paul Cézanne, 1888-1892.

and exclaimed that they were just as realistic as photographs. Cézanne's watercolors and Stieglitz's published photographs of 1911 both exhibit the fragmentation and layering of planes that appear in both that signified the "real" of the artist's subjective perception. *Le Viaduc* (figure 64, 1888-1892)—which appeared both at Bernheim-Jeune and at 291—makes this evident. *Le Viaduc* reveals only a fragment of the long railway bridge at the Arc River Valley for which painting is titled. The manmade form is nearly entirely submerged by foliage in the foreground. The rising land at the right foreground of the image combines with trees and shrubbery to impede a visual path towards the viaduct, like Stieglitz's wooden pilings. The prominence of foreground objects signals the embodiment of the painter, whose own view is obstructed by his placement in the scene he paints. From Cézanne's subjective perspective the foreground covers his view of the viaduct in the background. However the selective application of watercolor suggests that Cézanne's most felt "sympathy" centers on the railway bridge where the color is the most dense. The slight pigment applied to the foreground at the right contrasts to the lack of pigment applied to the trees at the left of the image, suggesting Cézanne's remaining attention is drawn more to the trees closer to him than the distant trees. As his attention drops away, both color and pencil disappear into the blankness of the paper. (Stieglitz was certainly correct in his initial assessment that much of the paper was bare.) Cézanne's uneven treatment of objects across the image reflect Bergson's theory of subjective perception in which perception consists of filtering and sifting, actively constructing images of the world from the sensations that interest one the most. For Bergson perception is never objective, but necessarily suggests a person's orientation toward the

world around them.[121] A similar treatment of planes and attention is exhibited in *Paysage* where the image appears to be made up of three successive planes layered on top of each other. The path at the foreground, the group of trees at the middle ground, and the house at the back ground. The path appears at first to offer an entry into the image, but that passage is abruptly cut off at the dense grouping of trees, leaving no visual walkway to the house. Instead the slight way in which the forms touch each other—path to trees to house—suggests a sensed route through the image—a felt meander unhinged from the ground and conventions of cartesian perspective. By defying expectations, the fragmented garden path signals a departure from conventions and an invitation to discover a new means for "entering" the picture.

Cézanne's rendering of sensation is not entirely different than the peculiar effects of the camera lens which creates the illusion that foreground objects are larger than and layered "on top of" objects at the middle ground and background in Stieglitz's images, such as *The City Across the River* (figure 65, 1910), *The Ferry Boat* and *Mauretania*. Stieglitz's use of water and sky in these opening images parallel the blankness of bare paper that he initially saw in Cézanne's watercolors. Water and sky, rendered at a similar middle gray value, form a plane of subdued detail that gives the objects in the photographs distinction from each other as isolated forms that appear to "float" across the picture. While the blankness gives the objects distinction from each other, it also

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121 Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 165. Though Cézanne's work and death predated Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, his paintings were largely interpreted through Bergson's ideas popular with modernists in Paris following the artist's death. A Bergsonian interpretation of his work is distinct, but certainly bears similarity to the phenomenological interpretation of how work that became dominant following Maurice Merleau-Ponty's essay on Cézanne; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt," in *Sense & Non-Sense*, trans. Patrica A. Dreyfus and Herbert L. Dreyfus (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 1–25; Susannah Rutherglen, "Merleau-Ponty's Doubt: Cézanne and the Problem of Artistic Biography," *Word & Image* 20, no. 3 (July 1, 2004): 219–27.

makes their relationship to each other more pronounced—accentuating their relative distance from the viewer and the ways they appear to "touch" each other. Like Cézanne's *Viaduc*, the pilings in *City Across the River* nearly upstage the city that is the named subject of the image and block the viewer's visual path to the city. Meanwhile the tugboat's plume of smoke obscures a half of the skyline burying the subject deeper in the picture. The application of color and detail in Cézanne is mirrored by the camera's focus and use of shadow for Stieglitz; the sharp focus on the pilings suggests the sensed immediacy of these mundane objects to the photographer's body, while the skyline asserts a competing visual weight with the density of its shadows. The extraordinary rising modern skyline pulls upon the gaze in wonder, while ordinary objects push toward the body in weight. Instead of a path that visually "walks" through the image, Stieglitz connects object by touch—the pilings to the harbor to the tugboat to the skyline—offering a succession of touches that builds off of the initial touch of the foreground to the immediate experience of the photographer and viewer. This appears again in *Mauretania* where the pilings at the foreground strongly mirror the ocean liner. A clear view of the ocean liner is marginally obscured by another ship that touches its stern—a sign of departure from convention. This strategy appears again in *Ferry Boat* where the pilings upstage and touch the ferry boat, while also mirroring the hats of the distant passengers. Stieglitz's statement that Cézanne's watercolors were just like straight photographs thus becomes understandable here as a comprehension for how the strange illusions created by the lens were in fact strikingly similar to Cézanne's rendering of his own sensations into an "organized system of planes, composed of objects, plastically real, enveloped in the rhythm of atmospheric depth."[122] In suggesting such similarity, he

[122] Caffin, "A Note on Paul Cézanne," 48-49.

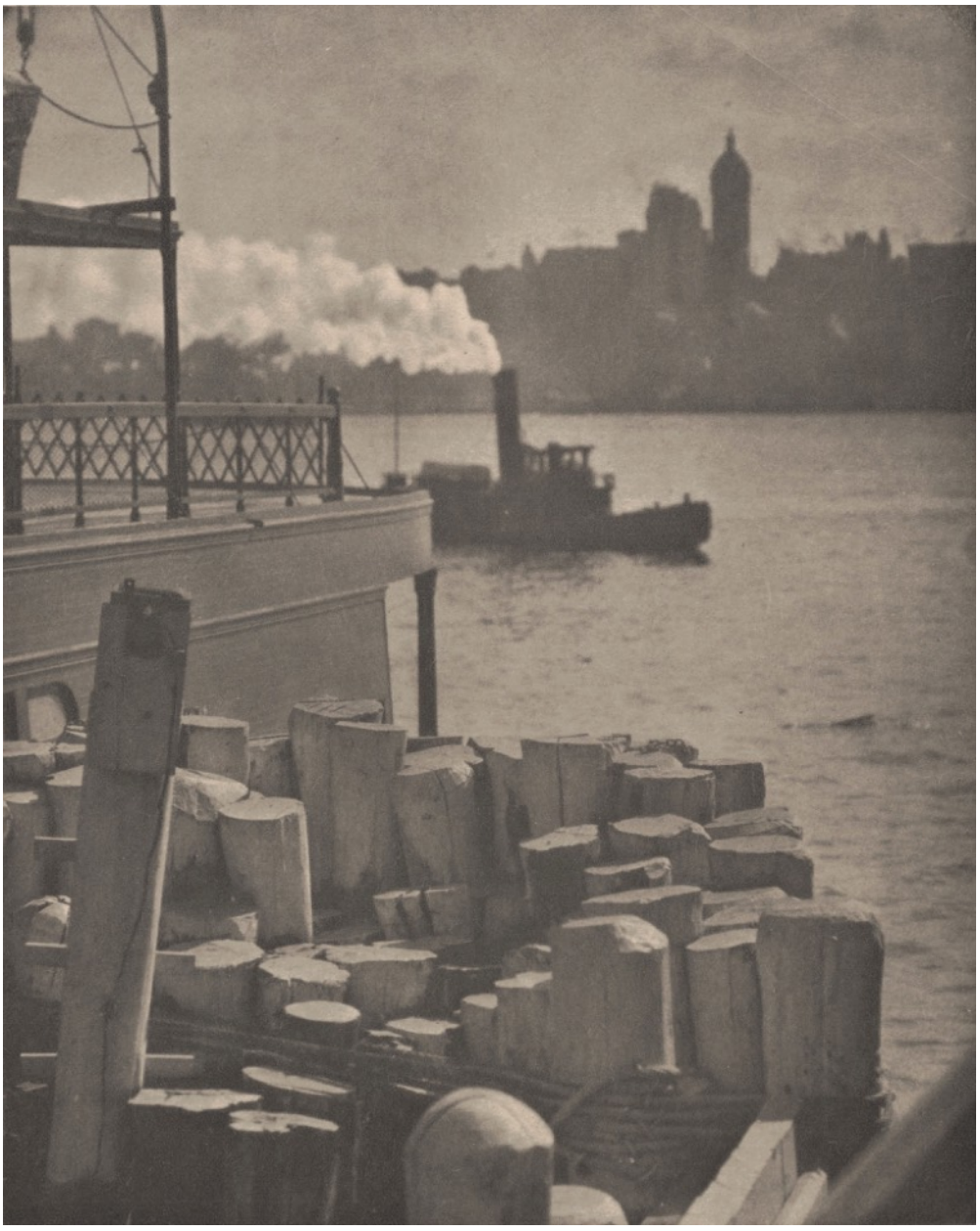

Figure 65. *City Across the River,* by Alfred Stieglitz, 1910.

proposed that his photographic vision was a snapshot-like primitivism based in the idea the the artist could access a "pure" primitive interiority, but also translate that sensation into a rational system for making images that were more "real" (and less idealized) than the viewer's eye was accustomed to seeing.

The apparent relationship of Stieglitz's opening sequence to Cézanne's watercolors also suggests that the images are related to each other as various "studies" of similar subject matter, rather than as a linear sequence. Cézanne's watercolors show the artist encountering the same subject matter repeatedly, but with different sensations emphasized each time, suggesting Cézanne's own movement or shifting sensed interpretation, rather than an unfolding of clocked time. Similar to Stieglitz's various meditations on the Manhattan skyline from different positions, Cézanne's watercolors of Montagne Sainte-Victoire show shifting elements in the foreground and middle ground in each composition.[123] *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire* (figure 66, 1885-1887), *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire* (figure 67, 1890-1895), and *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire* (figure 68, 1900-1902) each has a different foreground that alters the viewer's encounter of the mountain range. Figure 68 offers the least obstructed view of the mountains, with the suggested forms of rolling hills and distant forms of trees between the viewer and the mountain. Meanwhile figures 66 and 67 offer competing views with a large tree at the left foreground and the viaduct at the right middle ground of the image in figure 66 and a valley of trees at the foreground of figure 67 where it is a structure in the middle ground that partially obstructs view of the left side of the mountain. Cézanne's similar

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123 Stieglitz viewed five of these paintings at Bernheim-Jeune and exhibited one at 291. John Rewald, *Paul Cézanne: The Watercolors, A Cataloge Raisonné by John Rewald* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1983), 469-470.

Figure 66. *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire,* by Paul Cézanne, 1885-1887.

Figure 67. *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire,* by Paul Cézanne, 1890-1895.

Figure 68. *La Montagne Sainte-Victoire,* by Paul Cézanne, 1900-1902.

rendering of structures, trees, and the viaduct in other paintings draw his watercolors together as views that are unified by the artist himself as their mediator.

In Stieglitz's images, the recently-completed Singer building creates a similar repeating form in the background of several images, while pilings and ocean vessels also recur. By grouping together six photographs that shared subject matter, Stieglitz drew formal relationships between the images, calling attention to the images as an intentional sequence in a way that had not appeared previously in the pages of *Camera Work.* However they conspicuously defied chronological or narrative organizational logic, unlike chronophotographs or cinematographs. Instead, like in Cézanne's watercolors, the images seem to reconfigure the same forms in various combinations and from different perspectives and distances. *The City of Ambition* (1910, figure 69) opened the sequence with a view of lower Manhattan from across the Hudson River. In the images which follow the distance of the skyline shifts variously closer and further from the camera or disappears altogether. The Singer building, the Manhattan skyline, high rises, the ocean and shore, wooden pilings, ocean vessels, billowing smoke, and heavy clouds each repeat in some but not all of the images, indicating both similar and differing camera positions. For instance, in the three photographs in which wooden pilings appear in the foreground, two feature the same pilings viewed from different angles and distances while the other feature an entirely different group of pilings. Accordingly the viewer cannot clearly decipher whether the images were all made in the same or different locations, preventing the possibility of making straightforward connections between the images. Across the sequence, the photographs both overlap and split apart spatially and temporally. As soon as a correspondence between two or three images seems to indicate an underlying theme or strategy, an image follows that displaces the viewer again. Upon

Figure 69. *The City of Ambition*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1910.

Figure 70. *Lower Manhattan,* by Alfred Stieglitz, 1910.

Figure 71. *Old and New New York*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1910.

reaching *Lower Manhattan* (figure 70, 1910), the penultimate photograph in the sequence displaying a fifth variation on Manhattan waterfront subject matter, the viewer might begin to feel certain that the sequence was unified by formal considerations of water and land, only to be abruptly confronted with *Old and New New York* (figure 71, 1910). This final photograph presents a city view devoid of water or a distant skyline, but instead hemmed in on three sides by a cement ground and brick buildings with a partially-constructed high rise looming in the distance. This grouping would have been jarring in its capacity to unmoor readers from their familiar modes of viewing photographs as a verifiable source of information or replicating a stable naturalistic view of a definite subject. They instead pointed to a non-narrative and temporally-unclear sequence unified only by the photographer's subjective, fallible, and constantly shifting perspective.

Because Bergson frequently mentioned chronophotographs and cinematographs as exemplary of the problem with "intellect," it was important for Stieglitz to forge another way forward that related photography to Bergson's "creative evolution" but was not merely a mechanical "taking from outside the greatest possible number of views of [life], drawing it into itself instead of entering it."[124] Stieglitz's sequence instead suggests Bergson's instruction to enter into "sympathy" with one's subject matter. Coburn's description in "The Relation of Time to Art," mirrored the opening sequence's shifting proximity of lens-made hallucinations finally landing firmly on the city streets with buildings rising on all sides: "New York is a vision that rises out of the sea,… but which vanishes, but for fragmentary glimpses, as I become one of the grey creatures that crawl

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[124] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, excerpted in *Camera Work* 36, 20.

like ants, at the bottom of its gloomy caverns."[125] Coburn described a temporality of sensed experience in which the spatial journey into the city was a "creative evolution" toward a more instinctual primitive form of being—a creature crawling amidst caverns. Coburn merged the modernity of the city with the sensations of primitivism. This supplemented his suggestion that the camera was "naturally adapted" to the "age of steel" by marking the camera as a device for "sensing" rather than documenting the relation of time and space.[126]

Sensed time was another Bergsonian theory that appeared in *Creative Evolution*.[127] Bergson's concept of temporal "duration" was unassimilable to empirical representations of time and space. Like Bergson's theory of creative evolution, this was a temporality accessed via intuition rather intellect. The experience of time was a sensation of change that unfolded in physical space.[128] As Elizabeth Grosz explains of Bergson, the duration of time is not linear, but continuous and constantly interpenetrated by the dynamic relationship between past, present, and future. Though the present is oriented toward the future in constant anticipation, it is also frequently fractured by the past. The past appears in the present in two forms: as memory, in which past events become visible almost as if they were images; and as embodiment, in which the body habitually recognizes and reacts to its environment. A changing and unfamiliar environment thus causes an embodied and temporal sense of disorientation as the body lacks habituated adaptations to its space.[129] Thus the unfolding of what is typically considered to be linear

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[125] Coburn, "The Relation of Time to Art," 72.

[126] Coburn, 72.

[127] Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 15.

[128] Grosz, *The Nick of Time*, 161-163, 279n7.

[129] Grosz, 169-175.

time, is for Bergson not linear, nor merely temporal, but a complexly composited duration in which history continually materializes in a spatially-situated present.

Stieglitz's *Camera Work* 36 photographs transcribed Bergson's theories into the particular experience of New York modernity in the early twentieth century. Stieglitz's portrayal of New York was of a city clearly oriented toward the future with rising skyscrapers and a quickening pace of life. By combining non-linear sequencing with an embodied orientation toward the city's looming new architecture, Stieglitz's opening sequence expressed the body's relationship to modernity's newness as one of disorientation. He expressed New Yorkers' sense of temporal and spatial dislocation within the city amidst the building boom that peaked in 1909. At 612 feet tall, the Singer Building that features prominently in three of the photographs was the tallest building in the world at the time of its construction in 1908. However by the time Stieglitz made the 1910 images, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company Tower at 23rd Street had already surpassed it. Such buildings captivated the public imagination, symbolizing progress and economic boom, the transitory and unstable nature of the cityscape, as well as a nostalgia for the disappearing past. Henry James's *The American Scene* (1907) described the author's nostalgic response to experiencing the erasure of the city's "pastness" by the demolition and creation of new buildings in lower Manhattan and along Fifth Avenue.[130] James's conception of a lost pastness accords with Bergson's spatial conception of temporality in which a new and unfamiliar environments is experienced as an absence of embodied memory to perceive one's surroundings, causing a

~~sensory feeling~~

130 Nick Yablon, "The Metropolitan Life in Ruins: Architectural and Fictional Speculations in New York,1909-19," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (June 2004): 310; Henry James, *The American Scene* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1907), 76-92.

of change. Stieglitz was likely to have identified with James's sentiments about the ever-changing metropolis as his daily route along Fifth Avenue between his home and 291 increasingly boasted new high rises and skyscrapers.

Real estate development gave Manhattan a particular temporality that allowed for a local comprehension of Bergson's theory of the nonlinear folding over of temporalities in the present. While twenty-first century viewers might imagine that skyscrapers once symbolized the one-way orientation of the city toward the future under modern capitalism, such was not the case. Rather than symbolizing straightforward progress, the skyscraper symbolized an unstable relationship between time and space that made the disorienting effects of change uncomfortably apparent. The building of steel-framed skyscrapers often entailed the demolition of older brick buildings, making it seem as though they simultaneously brought the future into the present while also erasing the past. Furthermore, real estate speculation and the volatile economic shifts caused the lifespan of these seemingly indestructible steel giants to grow ever shorter. Because each skyscraper created a surplus of rentable housing units, a skyscraper was often demolished in order to create a housing demand that would pay for a new tower's construction.[131] Nowhere was this more visible than on the stretch of Fifth Avenue between Stieglitz's home and 291, which James described as looming with "monsters of the mere market."[132] Buildings and land, which had previously been considered to be the very tangible material of the metropolis and the earth below it—the very substance upon which society was built—became intangible goods traded on the market as if they were

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[131] Yablon, "The Metropolitan Life in Ruins," 310-311; Nick Yablon, *The Creative Destruction of Manhattan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 2, 21-24.

[132] Henry James, *The American Scene,* 80.

no more substantial than bushels of wheat.[133] As buildings dematerialized into commodities, Manhattan's inhabitants increasingly navigated their daily lives amidst surroundings that shifted constantly in a seemingly illogical manner. With constant demolition and building, skyscrapers symbolized an approaching future that was uncertain, senseless, and starkly devoid of the past. Skyscrapers produced complex spatial and temporal instability and displacement for New Yorkers.

In light of this, the flimsy appearance of the high rise at the background of *Old and New New York* takes on a new significance. Stieglitz's camera looks from Fifth Avenue toward the steel skeleton of a tower under construction on East 34th Street. The tower appears to be well-underway to blocking the entire view of the sky once visible from Fifth Avenue. The sheer immensity of the structure in comparison to the brownstones that surround it expresses the dominance of the new building. However, the tall buildings flanking the image at the left and right edges challenge the supremacy of the new building. Their solid dark forms are heavy with substance and age, contrasted to the flimsy apparition of the not-yet-built tower. The new building appears lighter because of the light admitted through its skeletal form, as well as due to the atmospheric effect of distance from the camera which dampens the sharpness of its form and density of its shadows. The material contrast between the buildings speaks to the fact that no matter the everlasting steel at its core, it was uncertain how long the new building would last in New York's volatile real estate market. The meaning of the image takes on a new significance from its usual interpretation as a straightforward contrast between a dying past and coming future. It is not merely a nostalgic image juxtaposing a disappearing nineteenth-century Manhattan with its certain skyscraper-crammed future. It also

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[133] Yablon, *Creative Destruction*, 35.

contrasts the solidity of a city based in a tangible economy to the immateriality of a city subjected to the whims of speculation that caused an evermore rapid succession of demolitions and constructions. The stand-in for the viewer (Max Weber posing) who punctuates the image by peering upwards and beyond the frame destroys the cohesion of the image as a whole by signifying an upward-rising reality beyond the view of the camera; he stands for the embodied disorientation of a New Yorker standing in the midst of construction and demolition, while also rupturing of unifying logic of the frame by looking beyond it.

Stieglitz's simultaneous picturing of embodied disorientation with the rupturing of the logic of pictorial representation has deeper significance. New Yorkers' disorientation was in part due to the way skyscrapers and real estate speculation disrupted America's ideologic unity by making starkly visible that which is typically concealed in settler culture: settlers' absurd relationship to occupied territory. The settler project is primarily motivated by land—possessing land, occupying land, extracting resources from the land. The land is a source of wealth, yet it is not a traditional homeland. Settler wealth is therefore not only *extracted* from the land, but also *abstracted* from the land's lived rootedness in fabrics of indigenous social history and natural ecosystems. In other words, land is not valued as an intact life-giving ecology, but for the ways in which it best serves the settlement as a site for housing, natural resource extraction, or cultural resource.[134] The real estate market and land speculation were an outgrowth of the settler attitude toward land. It illustrates land's value as a source of wealth production divorced from familial, social, ecological, or spiritual connections to

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134 For more on the relationship between abstraction and the extraction of resources, see chapter three; See also Martin Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 62-69.

the land—as well as the violence characteristic of the settler's extraction of wealth from the land. However it differed from other illogics of settler land use in its large-scale visibility. The ethical and ecological imprudence of land use is typically camouflaged by the mythological function of settler usable pasts that fabricate settlers' righteous relationship to the land. The "monstrous" visible effects of land speculation on New York's streets thus unveiled the incommensurability of the settlement's behavior toward land with its ideological beliefs.

Bergson's conception of temporal disorientation thus had an uncommon resonance for the urban American settlement at the turn of the century. The loss of historical presence experienced with the rise of "new" New York produced not only an embodied sense of temporal displacement, but a sensed ideological disorientation. Settlers require historical narratives that legitimize the settlement as naturally related to its land in order to continually renew the settlement's lease on amnesia regarding the senselessness and violence of its foundations.[135] Urban environments occupy a special place in the settlement in this regard. They complete the amnesia of settlement by effectively occupying indigenous lands while rendering indigeneity profoundly out of place both temporally and spatially.

This displacement relies not only upon the city's modernity, but also upon its "Europeanization." Settlers perceive the "improvement" of the settlement according to European standards of civilization as confirming their natural and historical relationship to the land—for it certainly the land appears suited to their cultural tastes.[136] This was especially true on Fifth Avenue where Stieglitz's own family had moved into their

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[135] Johnston and Lawson, "Settler Colonies," 361; Damian Skinner, "Settler-Colonial Art History: A Proposition in Two Parts," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 35, no. 1 (2014): 167.

[136] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 21-22; See also chapter one.

luxurious 60th Street brownstone in 1871 when Fifth Avenue was paved with cobblestones only up to 59th Street. Fifth Avenue's residents sought to create a civilized bourgeois enclave modeled after European cities. They developed public institutions and spaces that heightened the atmosphere of bourgeois society including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Temple Emanu-El, Columbia College, the Lenox Library, and Central Park.[137] By the turn of the century, the Stieglitzes' brownstone bordered a stretch of Fifth Avenue lined with the mansions of wealthy families including the Vanderbilts and Astors. However with the introduction of steel architecture to New York's landscape, Fifth Avenue soon came to embody the more peculiar emerging reality of New York's real estate market. As Veracini asserts, changes in the land are never completed in the settlement.[138] The marble mansions that had once seemed so permanent and palatial rarely lasted forty years before being demolished to make way for high rises and skyscrapers.[139] The demolished buildings did not compose the loss of an actual long elite historical presence in the city, but an imagined one. The "new" city that replaced it was unfamiliar because it did not mask the settlement's newness nor its unrestrained appetite for land. As Veracini describes, such moments of conflict between reality and fantasy often occur in the settlement, when the realities of the capitalist mechanisms required to accommodate the growing settlement conflict with its ideological construction as a virtuous community. Settlers form a variety of defensive explanations in response, often attributing the problem to a group deemed extrinsic to the settlement—such as greedy Wall Street tycoons disconnected from the true settler

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[137] David M. Scobey, *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 117.

[138] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism,* 23.

[139] Yablon, *Creative Destruction*, 24-26.

populace—is out of sync with the settlement's intrinsic virtuosity. Such constructions overlook the appearance of the settlement's actual founding principles—violent land appropriation—whose invisibility has been temporarily lifted.[140]

If Bergson's complexly folded temporality was posed as a "real" sense of time that is "intuitively" sensed in contrast to rationally measured clocked time, Stieglitz's intuitively "naive" photographs functioned to fold together past and present in a way that made real the "feeling" of settler time. Bergson conceptualized that the sensation of change was the "real" sense of time's unfolding. However, while in New York the loss of relatively-new buildings was certainly a "real" loss to be sensed in the Bergsonian sense, it was also a loss of the settler's fantasmatic screen of historical presence in the city. To "sense" as real the disorienting absence of demolished buildings was thus to turn away from the loss of a fantasy and instead feel the reality of the legitimized settlement for which the buildings once stood. In this regard James's description of his nostalgia for an "old" New York and quest to find the disappearing signs of "pastness" is infused with the indigenizing function of settler narratives. To belong to a disappearing past, is to claim that one is a "native" New Yorker, who knew the traditional city as it once was in a bygone era.[141] Similarly, Stieglitz's expression of temporal and spatial disorientation in the opening sequence of photographs terminates at *Old and New New York*—a punctuation that is at first its own sort of disorientation in its rupture from the prior photographs' views of water. It expresses the spirit of both James's and also Coburn's narrative—approaching New York from the sea to "become one of the grey creatures that crawl

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[140] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 75-76.

[141] A common "narrative transfer" by which settlers claim indigenous presence in the settlement is to claim that people born in a place are indigenous to that place or to similarly use the past as legitimizing a long and continuous settler presence. Veracini, 46.

about like ants," in the disorienting presence of the city's folding temporalities. As Bergson describes of the sensation of memory in the present, the more history one has with an object the more that it is perceived as a solid thing with complexity and detail. The same can be said of the contrast between the old and the new in *Old and New New York*. Contrasted to the nearly transparent and abstract shape of the erecting tower are the sharp, solid, and detailed brownstones replete with hand-ornamentation and human life buzzing around their doorsteps. The forms' contrasted familiarity and unfamiliarity is thus rendered sensible at the level of focus, light, and shadow. The pictured nostalgia for New York's dying past thus re-stabilizes a sense of ideological reality, using the feeling of familiarity to confirm a collective usable past that invents a new—and distinctly modern—historical narrative to affirm the settlement's long historical presence and renew its lease on amnesia.[142] Or as Travis Wysote and Erin Morton put it, "white settler nativism forces the land to lie" through realist representations that picture ecological systems which have been dramatically transformed into property in ways that "continually appropriate, develop, and redevelop tautologies that claim Indigenous land."[143]

Additionally, by invoking the terms "old" and "new" New York in his title, Stieglitz suggested the reality of a fabricated history with which his New Yorker viewers would have been aware. By 1911 those terms had also become shorthand for a temporality inflected with class and racial meanings that recalled an imagined pure history that anticipated a racially-cleansed future for Fifth Avenue. In 1907 Fifth Avenue residents formed the Fifth Avenue Association (FAA), a private organization that used

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[142] On the reproduction and creation of new collective usable pasts see Walter L. Hixson, *American Settler Colonialism: A History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 11; Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 102.

[143] Travis Wysote and Erin Morton, "'The Depth of the Plough': White Settler Tautologies and Pioneer Lies," *Settler Colonial Studies* 9, no. 4 (2019): 480-481.

Figure 71a. *Excavating—New York*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1910.

temporality as a way to "preserve" their version of Fifth Avenue. Though Fifth Avenue was less than fifty years old and had almost no historic buildings, the FAA fabricated a collective memory for its residents that established the Avenue as a place that was traditionally white and wealthy. "Old" came to signify an aristocratic culture modeled after European bourgeois society. It consisted of museums, elite places of worship, elite educational institutions and sites of leisure time—a shopping district and Central Park. By using the term "old" as shorthand for an elite society on the Avenue, the FAA inspired residents to act decisively to "preserve" the purity of the Avenue. "New" New York stood for the encroachment of the poor and immigrants from New York's other neighborhoods who came to work, beg, and peddle goods along the commercializing avenue. Despite its designation "old" Fifth Avenue stood for a vision for progress toward a civilized bourgeois future, while on the other hand "new" New York represented the backwards movement toward a savage state of civilization represented by the lifestyles of lower Manhattan threatening to spread uptown. Only two blocks to the west of the Avenue, Broadway was quickly transforming into an epicenter of "vulgarity," overrun with popular culture, immigrants, and the poor.[144] The residents of Fifth Avenue regarded Broadway as a backwards savage land that threatened to encroach upon their civilized bourgeois public spaces, institutions, and luxury shopping district.[145] Stieglitz's invocation of "old" and "new" New York therefore did not speak of a nostalgia for New York's actual past, but for instead established as historical truth a past that was, in Bergson's folded sense, sensed in

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[144] Yablon, *Creative Destruction*, 35-61.

[145] Interestingly, Broadway was a traditional indigenous trade route and therefore perhaps in some way the association with savagery drew upon this historical memory; As Yablon and Porter point out, this speaks to what is often called the "inverse" form of urban colonialism, in which colonization creates conditions in which marginalized people are forced to live in cities, but once there are coerced into similar "separate and unequal" conditions that exist elsewhere in the settlement.

the present, and also orienting that present toward a utopian future. As Warren I. Susman established in his foundational analysis of American historical practice, usable pasts at the turn of the century consistently utilized historical myth in exactly this way—as less of a recording of an actual past so much as means for shaping civilization and propelling historical change.[146] In this sense the "intuitive" nature of Bergson's "real" sense of temporality can be seen as fitting into the America's existing settler time as it attempted to grapple with the ideological paradoxes of settler modernity: the use of history as a means of legitimizing as natural and inevitable the progress of the settlement according to whites settlers' wishes.

The folding together of the old and the new continued beyond the opening sequence into the pairs of photographs that followed *Old and New New York*. A photograph of a newly invented airplane was paired with a photograph of a becoming-obsolete dirigible; a child swimming in a lake was paired with children crowded around a public pool; a modern train paired with an outmoded hansome cab.[147] *The Steerage* was paired with *Excavating—New York* (figure 71a, 1911), the most recent of all the photographs in the issue. *Excavating* pictures a crew of horses, men, and machinery digging in preparation for laying a foundation for a new tower. At the left foreground of the image the foreman of the crew oversees the scene from atop a horse-drawn cart, his back turned to the viewer. As in *The Steerage* and *Old and New New York*, this figure

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[146] Warren I. Susman, "History and the American Intellectual: The Uses of a Usable Past," *American Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1964): 243-263; On Susman's belated recognition and continuing importance to analysis of American cultural history see Paul V. Murphy, "The Last Progressive Historian: Warren Susman and American Cultural History," *Modern Intellectual History* 14, no. 3 (2017): 807-835.

[147] *Camera Work,* no. 36: 23-64.

appears to be a stand-in for Stieglitz and likewise for the viewer by extension. He is both within the photograph, but also removed from the action in his contemplative pause as an onlooker taking in the whole of the scene as a photographer or viewer might. His gaze draws the viewer into the depth of the picture. Meanwhile a wall and freshly-broken earth reproduce the Cézanne-like effect that the water achieved in prior photographs—to create a quasi-blankness against which the subjects gain definition. The repeating round forms of the back ends of several dark horses appear layered on top of each other, guiding the viewer's gaze further into the depth of the picture. The drooped heads of the horses coupled with the long afternoon shadows at the foreground's edge and rear wall suggest the end of a tiring work day. Beyond the horses several men appear engrossed in their work, which centers upon the large steam shovel towering over them. While steam shovels had been invented in the mid-nineteenth century and were widely used to clear the way for laying railroad tracks across the nation, they did not appear in construction until the building of modern skyscrapers necessitated heavier equipment to dig their large foundations.[148] The weary stationary horses posed against the active hard-working machinery signified the end of an era that relied upon the labor of horses for manual labor and travel. The temporality sensed in the image is again one of contact between the old and new, between a common sense relationship to the land and an increasingly abstract one.

In *Excavating* the literal substance of the land appears to dematerialize before the viewer's eyes. The bucket of the excavating machine is filled to the brim with a freshly extracted mass of earth. The weight of the unearthed soil is tangible, requiring a large

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148 Sarah Bradford Landau and Carl W. Condit, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper, 1865-1913* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 39.

machine and several men to extract and move it. It is at once the material foundation of the settlement and also an immaterial commodity traded on Wall Street. This extraction of soil from the ground represents the contrast between material earth and commodified land. With the quickening extraction enabled by steam-powered machinery came the conceptual dematerialization of the land. What made mathematical sense on the stock market made little common sense to New Yorkers. They watched landscape around them visibly transform in response to the wheeling and dealing of financiers who may not have laid eyes upon the land and buildings they constructed, bought, sold and demolished. Like the ghostly tower posed against brownstones in *Old and New New York*, this photograph would have spoken to contemporary viewers of the apparent overlapping temporalities and counterintuitive materialization and dematerialization of physical reality that unfolded on city streets ruled by market forces. Again, the pastness of the "real" relationship to the land functions to reinforce a fantasmatic screen. Manpowered contact with the New York land here becomes the urban equivalent of the "oxen and plow" fantasy of the frontier—the means by which the act of clearing and settling land becomes an oft-repeated narrative that tautologically indigenizes the settler to the land. The act of recording the disappearing past renews the myth in modern America's collective memory.[149]

While the exact location of *Excavating* is not clear, Stieglitz's New York photographs were often made along routes that he frequented.[150] Between 291 and his

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[149] For discussion of the indigenizing function of oxen and plow representations see Wysote and Morton, "'The Depth of the Plough,'"480-486.

[150] See for example *Five Points, New York* (1893) made one block East of the Photochrome Engraving Company that Stieglitz and his friends ran briefly from 1891 to 1895; *Winter—Fifth Avenue* (1902) made near the Camera Club of New York; *Old and New New York* (1910) made three blocks North of 291; and *City of Ambition* (1910) made along the ferry route Stieglitz made weekly during the summer between Deal Beach, New Jersey and Manhattan to visit his wife and daughter.

adulthood home was the stretch of Fifth Avenue between 31st and 83rd streets, where Stieglitz passed many of the new high rises being built in Times Square. The location may have been nearby Times Square at 11 East 36th Street where construction was then underway for a new high rise and storefront location for Haviland & Co., the famous china-manufacturing company belonging to the family of Stieglitz's friend and financial backer Paul Haviland.[151] The Haviland & Co. building was one of many buildings under construction anticipated to quickly and radically transform the neighborhood. A full-page 1910 *New York Times* feature predicted a futuristic view of Times Square in 1911 when several towers would be completed: "Times Square is undergoing a transformation so radical in character as is destined in the near future to make it not only the busiest but the liveliest section of Manhattan." In contrast to Stieglitz's construction crew horses in *Excavating* or the lone hansom cab in his 1894 *Winter—Fifth Avenue*, the speculative drawing pictures an intersection crowded with motor cars, rapid transit trolleys, and pedestrians who make their way around the footprints of towering office buildings and hotels. The article announces plans for the new Heidelberg Tower, "which will penetrate the air 250 feet above the street" to be used exclusively for advertising: "at night the lights radiating from thousands of electric bulbs will be discernible for scores of miles."[152] Noticeably missing from this future were horses or brownstones, as if a distinct break between past and future would be achieved in a years' time. While Stieglitz pictured none of the new technologies prevalent on the Square, the weary horses, steam shovel, and their foreman mark a more complex march of time than that of the *Times* feature. A

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[151] "The Real Estate Field: Construction Co. Buys Plot in Times Square Section for Twelve-Story Hotel—Haviland & Co.'s Purchase —Dwellings Give Way to Lofts," *New York Times* (May 17, 1910): 15.

[152] "A Glimpse of Times Square in the Year 1911," *New York Times* (February 27, 1910): 37-38.

photograph taken of Times Square in 1909 reveals that the coexistence of old and new technologies was likely closer to the Times Square that Stieglitz knew than the one the *Times* predicted. At the foot of the Times Building are both hansom cabs and motorcars. Whereas the *New York Times* found it more compelling to compartmentalize past, present, and future, predicting a near future that had none of the horse-powered elements of the past, Stieglitz allows this complexity into the image.

In *Excavating*, by allowing the horses (past) and steam shovel (present) and skyscraper foundation (future) to all occupy the same image, Stieglitz demonstrated that his understanding of the relationship of photography to time had shifted since he cast aside *The Steerage* in 1907. At the turn of the century, Stieglitz had largely limited himself to traditional subjects and dampened the newness of the city with atmospheric elements in order for photography to gain a relationship to traditional forms of fine art. He intentionally turned his camera away from any signs that the city was occupied by twentieth-century technologies such as electric signs and motorcars. A twenty-first century viewer of Stieglitz's early photographs might be surprised to learn that electric advertising, rapid transit trolleys, and motorcars were already a common element of daily life in the city. Their exclusion emphasizes how the aesthetic mixture of "ancient races" of Europe with the state-of-the-art steel of the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* had initially seemed incongruous to Stieglitz. However, his exposure to Bergson and modernist primitivism engendered new ideas about art's intuitive relationship to temporality that opened the door to a new relationship of photography to time. By pairing *Excavating* with *The Steerage* Stieglitz now deliberately drew attention to the mismatched temporalities that existed within each of the two images and reinforced his radical departure from his prior approach to photography's relationship to time.

However it was *Excavating* that stood out as the punctuating cornerstone of the Stieglitz's 1911 *Camera Work* series. It was the newest photograph that appeared in the series and represented the most current developments in Stieglitz's conception of photography. The title and subject of the photograph related the image to Courbet's *Stonebreakers* (1849, figure 72), the painting that along with *Burial at Ornans* (1849-1850) famously commenced modernism's rejection of academic painting when it was exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1850. Courbet had controversially depicted working class subjects using a style that referenced the popular and vernacular imagery of his time. The subjects of the painting are two poor laborers near Maisères in Eastern France. The older of the pair, a man around seventy years old, kneels with a sledgehammer in the air, breaking up rocks along the side of the highway. Behind him a youth holds a basket in which he collects the broken rocks. The task of collecting rocks would have been understood as one performed only by those living in extreme poverty.[153] Poor laborers were not considered appropriate subjects for large-scale history paintings, and as such, their act of breaking stones alongside the highway later became a metaphor for the groundbreaking naive style and subject matter that broke with bourgeois academic traditions of painting to pave the way modernism's reconsideration of pictorial representation. German art critic Julius Meier-Graefe declared in 1908 that, "Courbet had cleft the earth with mighty strokes of the spade, and bequeathed us not only brilliant works, but the possibility of a new conception of Nature."[154] With *Excavating* Stieglitz related his own work to Courbet's *Stonebreakers*. He pictured working-class subjects

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153 Courbet, quoted in Michael Fried, "Painter into Painting: On Courbet's 'After Dinner at Ornans' and 'Stonebreakers,'" *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1982): 635-636.

154 Julius Meier-Graefe, *Modern Art: Being a Contribution to a New System of Aesthetics, trans. Florence Simmonds and George W. Chrystal*, vol. 1 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1908), 264.

similarly engaged in breaking ground. A simplified background similarly frames both Courbet's canvas and Stieglitz's photograph, placing emphasis on the unpretentious subjects not typically suited to their fine art genres. As Caffin would quote Courbet in *The Story of French Painting* (1911), "Better paint railway stations with views of the places through which we travel, with likenesses of great men through whose birthplaces we pass, with engine-houses, mines and manufactories. For these are the saints and miracles of the nineteenth century."[155] By relating his photograph to Courbet's canvas, Stieglitz insinuated that he was performing a similar act of reconfiguring photographic representation—using a snapshot vernacular to picture working-class heroes—and should be understood as a successor to Courbet's genius. Such an assessment would cement his desired place in the lineage of great modernists.

As art historians finally began to embrace Cézanne in the years after his death; they made sense of his canvases by upholding the painter as the latest in a lineage of genius artists beginning with Courbet who passed their modernist pedigree down through the generations. In this narrative Manet inherited the lineage from Courbet who in turn passed it down to Cézanne.[156] An art history book advertised in *Camera Work* (1916) was one of many texts that made modernism understandable to American audiences by explaining Courbet as the predecessor of Cézanne:

> Courbet who brought to art a new mental attitude without which there would be no excuse for modern painting. By turning men's thoughts from

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[155] Charles Caffin, *The Story of French Painting* (New York: The Century Company, 1911), 162; Caffin likely obtained this quote from Richard Muther, *The History of Modern Painting* (London: J.M. Dent & Co., 1907), 396, in which the identical translation appears.

[156] See for example Meier-Graefe, *Modern Art*; Charles Caffin, *The Story of French Painting* (New York: The Century Company, 1911); and James Gibbons Huneker, *Promenades of an Impressionist* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 7-10. Caffin and Huneker were both contributors to *Camera Work*.


Figure 72. *The Stoenbreakers,* by Gustav Courbet, 1849.

> ancient Italy to the actualities of their own day, and by expelling the literary canvas from art, he left those who came after him free to evolve a medium which would translate the new vision.[157]

This mental attitude was one that posed the ideal against the real, the fabricated against the sincere. In 1903 French art critic Camille Mauclair described Courbet as "a painter who made up his mind to paint only what he saw, and to restrict his effort to this."[158] Whereas critics had once been unable to find naturalistic representation in Cézanne's canvases, they now reassessed Cézanne as Courbet's successor with a humble talent for depicting "actual perceptions of things as they are."[159] By 1910 Meier-Graefe declared of Cézanne that, "A healthy tincture of Courbet clung to him all his days."[160] And British art critic Charles J. Holmes found in Cézanne's canvases traces of Courbet's "rude handling" of subject matter and "heavy pigment." The "clumsiness" and apparently incoherent compositions for which Cézanne's work was initially rejected, was now thought to give his work "sincerity" and "force." Holmes stated that, "Honesty is his paramount virtue, and this quality sometimes enables Cézanne to impress us more than men of infinitely finer gifts."[161] In other words it was the apparently crude quality of Cézanne's rendering that deemed his work more honest than the idealized naturalism of

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[157] Willard Huntington Wright, *Modern Painting: Its Tendency and Meaning* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1915), 58; The advertisement appears in *Camera Work,* no. 48 (October 1916), 83.

[158] Camille Mauclair, *The Great French Painters and the Evolution of French Painting from 1830 to the Present Day*, both trans. P.G. Konody (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1903), 36.

[159] Caffin, *The Story of French Painting*, 219.

[160] Meier-Graefe, *Modern Art*, 269.

[161] Charles J. Holmes, *Notes on the Post-Impressionist Painters: Grafton Galleries, 1910-1911* (London: P. L. Warner, 1910), 12-13, 22; Carol A. Nathanson, "The American Reaction to London's First Grafton Show," *Archives of American Art Journal* 25, no. 3 (1985): 6.

what Mauclair deemed "technical artificiality."[162] It was particularly the qualities associated with primitivism that were thought to connect the two painters and lend their artworks a quality of honesty and realism that critics contrasted to the idealism of academic painting.

By calling his photographs "snapshots" Stieglitz therefore made explicit that his own challenge to pictorialism's relationship with academic painting was one posed through a vernacular style that related his work to the modernist primitivism. The idea of the snapshot functioned to frame his photographs as products of an intuitive genius process that was more sincere than pictorialism because it drew upon the photographer's direct perceptions of reality rather than mimicry of outdated allegorical subject matter and compositions.

However, like Brigman, Stieglitz's primitivism was not merely European modernism transposed into an American setting, it was a distinctly settler primitivism. The vernacular "honesty" of Stieglitz's portrayal was matched to his humble subjects performing honest work in a way that ushered settler narratives into twentieth-century urban modernity. Mirroring Courbet's insistence upon picturing contemporary laborers as modern heroes, Stieglitz created a usable past that solidified as "real" a collective memory of skyscrapers' humble beginnings on bare American soil. As Susman points out, the widespread trend of artists and intellectuals creating usable pasts that began around the turn of the century aimed at protecting American moral values and solving social problems that arose with post-frontier modernizing.[163] *Excavating* does exactly this. It

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[162] Mauclair, *The Great French Painters*, 36.

[163] Warren I. Susman, "History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Usable Past," *American Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1964): 252–263.

undermines the narrative of a senseless greed-driven urban modernity and returns New York to the virtuous narratives of the frontier.

However, *Excavating* would not be exhibited after 1913, while *The Steerage* would come to be known as the most groundbreaking of his Stieglitz's *Camera Work* 36 photographs. This is likely due to the attention it received that made him first reevaluate the image. De Zayas and Picasso particularly influenced Stieglitz's partiality for *The Steerage.* Though Stieglitz's reevaluation of the image had initially required considerable effort on the part of Weber and de Zayas, its elevated status followed quickly after de Zayas learned of Picasso's affinity for photography during a 1914 studio visit in which he introduced Picasso to *The Steerage.* He reported back to Stieglitz,

> We had a very interesting and intimate talk on art and on his latest manner of expression. He open[ed] himself quite frankly. I will try to write down what he said because it will interest you. The sum and total of his talk was that he confesses that he has absolutely enter[ed] into the field of photography. I showed him your photographs… He came to the conclusion that you are the only one who has understood photography and understood and admired the 'steerage' to the point that I felt inclined to give it to him.[164]

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[164] De Zayas to Stieglitz, June 11, 1914, reprinted in de Zayas, *How, When, and Why*, 177.

Figure 73. *The Steerage,* by Alfred Stieglitz, 1907, as it appeared in *291* no. 8/9, 1915.

*The Steerage,* by Alfred Stieglitz, 1907, as it appeared in *Camera Work* no. 36, 1910. (for comparison)

The letter appears to confirm that Picasso and Stieglitz "understood" photography similarly, but offers no details about the substance of the conversation. That this letter is typically cited when marking *The Steerage* as the first modernist photograph assumes an affinity between the artists that may not have existed. Stieglitz responded in a letter to de Zayas, "To me the Steerage has always been a great favorite. As a matter of fact it comes nearest to expressing the thing I wanted to express. There are only two or three photographs that I ever made which I consider really successful from my point of view."[165] Stieglitz's untruthful response to de Zayas marks a turning point in which Stieglitz finally came to regard the image as central to his oeuvre.[166] Following de Zayas's return from Europe, Stieglitz reprinted *The Steerage* (figure 73, 1907/1915) for de Zayas and Paul Haviland's new journal, named *291* after the gallery.[167] Rather than reproduce the same interpretation of the 1907 negative that he had produced for *Camera Work* 36, Stieglitz pulled an entirely new gravure, making slight changes to the tonal values of the image.[168] This new gravure therefore reflected Stieglitz's evolving understanding of the photograph and its relationship to modernist primitivism.

However, *The Steerage*'s appearance in *291* only served to highlight the likelihood that Stieglitz and de Zayas continued to perceive the image differently. While Lauren Kroiz detailed Stieglitz's discomfort with the perception of *The Steerage* that de Zayas

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165 Stieglitz to de Zayas, June 22, 1914, reprinted in de Zayas, *How, When, and Why*, 174-179.

166 Stieglitz to de Zayas, June 22, 1914.

167 *291* was a monthly journal devoted to avant-garde modern art and satire edited by Marius de Zayas and Paul Haviland from March 1915 to February 1916. *The Steerage* appeared in *291,* no. 8/9 (September-October 1915).

168 Photogravure is a method for reproducing photographs by printing on paper from a copper plate on which a contact-print of the photographic negative has been imprinted. Around the turn of the century, photogravures (or gravures) were valued as works of art, like etchings or lithographs. *Camera Work* photographs were printed as photogravures, often on Japan tissue, that were hand-tipped into the magazine.

voiced in *291*, the topic deserves revisiting because the disjuncture reveals differences between the two artists' conceptions about photography as a primitivist modern art.[169] De Zayas published an analysis of *The Steerage* in a special issue of *291* devoted solely to the photograph. For de Zayas *The Steerage* was singular in its importance because it demonstrated that there was a factual basis for primitivist abstraction in European modern art:

> If modern plastic expression has made us conceive the possibility of creating new forms to express new sentiments, photography in the hands of Stieglitz has succeeded in determining the objectivity of form, that is to say, in obtaining the initial condition of the phenomena of form, phenomena, which under the domain of human thought gave birth to emotions, sensations, and ideas.[170]

He believed that by recording an unidealized view of reality, *The Steerage* provided photographic evidence that modern painters' abstractions were based on their sensory and emotional response to a verifiable material reality. For de Zayas the groundbreaking importance of *The Steerage* was its utility in making modern art intelligible to American audiences. In a 1911 letter to Stieglitz de Zayas wrote, "I believe, and insist, that [modern art] needs explanation, especially in America, and that the exhibitions you are making of [modern art] wouldn't have their full value if some one doesn't take the trouble to [write about] them."[171] Accordingly de Zayas published challenges to critics such as Albert Barnes who believed that cubist abstractions were not representations of reality,

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[169] Kroiz, *Creative Composites,* 88-89.

[170] Marius de Zayas, *291*.

[171] De Zayas to Stieglitz, January 25, 1911, reprinted in de Zayas, *How, When, and Why*, 161.

but of convoluted theories and riddles. "It was a wise man who said that great art speaks for itself and is independent of formulae," Barnes stated in *Arts & Decoration*. "Cubism was so choked up with formulae that it could not speak for itself."[172] De Zayas countered such perceptions by illustrating that cubism was in fact based on a direct relationship to the objective facts of the material world. He responded to Barnes's article: "All art is composed of two elements, the fact and the idea. That is to say, one part objective, concrete, which is the work of art itself; and one part subjective, abstract, by which we take cognizance of the objective part." He concluded that Barnes must have failed to see this because he had "completely shut his eyes to the reality of the facts."[173] De Zayas's writing aimed to teach people how to open their eyes: "my main object has been to suggest the way in which [modern art] ought to be seen."[174] For de Zayas, Stieglitz's photograph revealed that the "objective, concrete" reality before one's eyes was the same reality cubist painters depicted on the canvas.In another *291* essay regarding Americans' belated appreciation modern art, he claimed, "New York, at first, did not see." For de Zayas the failure to perceive the realism of cubism was a physiological failure of eyes.

De Zayas's understanding of photography as illustrative of cubism's "objective, concrete" relationship to reality accorded to the nascent period of cubism during Picasso's 1909 summer at Horta and early 1910 winter at his studio on boulevard de Clichy in Paris. In *Picasso and Photography: The Dark Mirror*, Anne Baldassari argues that Picasso utilized photographs to develop *Houses on the Hill* (figure 74, 1909).[175] Many of the

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[172] Albert C. Barnes, "Cubism: Requiescat in Pace," *Arts and Decoration* 6, no. 3 (January 1916): 121.

[173] Marius de Zayas, "Cubism?" *Arts and Decoration* 6, no. 6 (April 1916): 284.

[174] De Zayas to Stieglitz, January 25, 1911.

[175] Anne Baldassari, *Picasso and Photography: The Dark Mirror* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), 74-80.

Figure 74. *Houses on the Hill*, by Pablo Picasso, 1909.

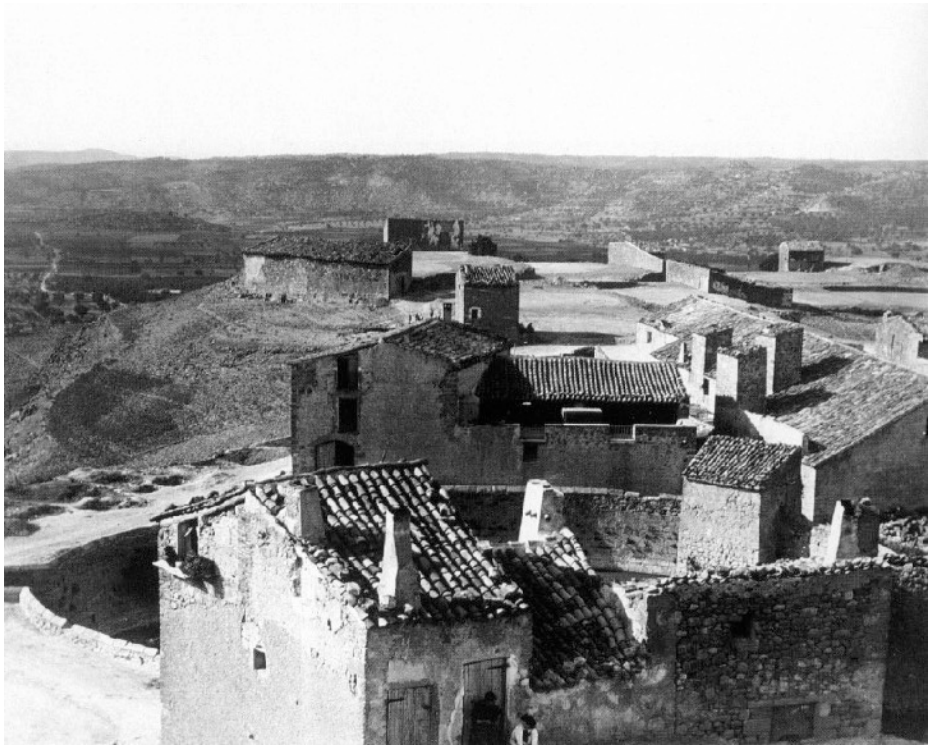

Figure 75. *Landscape, Horta de Ebro (The Reservoir)*, by Pablo Picasso, 1909.

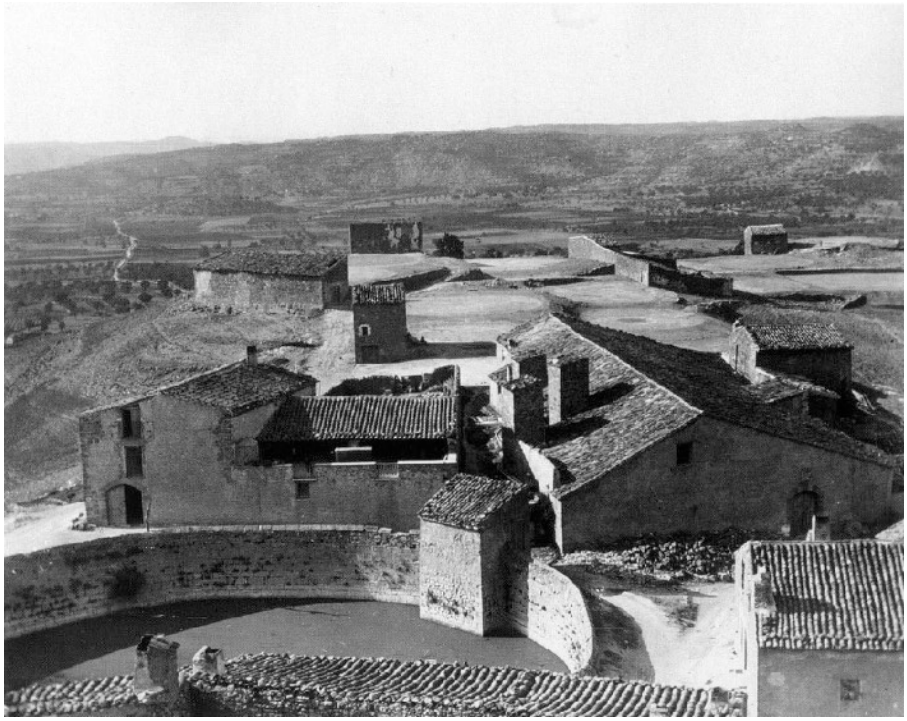

Figure 76. *Landscape, Horta de Ebro (The Reservoir)*, by Pablo Picasso, 1909.

strange visual effects in *Houses on the Hill* can be found in Picasso's photographs *Landscape, Horta de Ebro (The Reservoir)* (1909, figures 75-76). What appears as a distorted flattening of perspective and "tilting" of the landscape toward the viewer are effects that also appear as mechanically translated "visual facts" in the photograph. The ordinary distortion of the lens makes the hills in the distance appear to be "above" the houses even though a person trained to "see" photographs would understand the hills to be in the distance rather than above the houses. Similarly, the lens distortion renders the houses and rooftops in the foreground as "larger" than the houses behind them, with their walls and rooftops pushing toward the viewer and spilling toward the edges of the frame. This photographic effect translated onto the canvas harkened to Galton and James's conclusions about primitive perceptions of the world in which illusions presented themselves to the mind as if they were real. Whereas an educated person applied their knowledge to deciphering visible reality in order to perceive that a "larger" object was in fact closer than a "smaller" object, the primitive mind was believed to have no such capacity for visual analysis.[176] It was believed that the civilized mind analyzed and processed raw visual facts in order to transform them into comprehensible information about the world. When de Zayas used the term "objective" in reference to paintings and photographs he referred to objects encountered in the material world simply and directly without the mediation of civilized mental analysis.[177] *Over the House Tops, Missen* (figure 77, 1911) by Karl F. Struss published by Stieglitz in *Camera Work* (1912) illustrated the

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[176] James, *Principles of Psychology*, 54-72.

[177] A letter to Stieglitz makes this distinction clear: "Picasso represents in his work the expression of pure sensibility, the action of matter on the senses and also of the sense on matter while Picabia's work is the expression of pure thought. Picasso could never work without dealing with objectivity while Picabia forgets matter to express only maybe the memory of something that has happened. He expresses the object the other the action." De Zayas to Stieglitz, June 30, 1914, reprinted in De Zayas, *How, When, and Why*, 180.

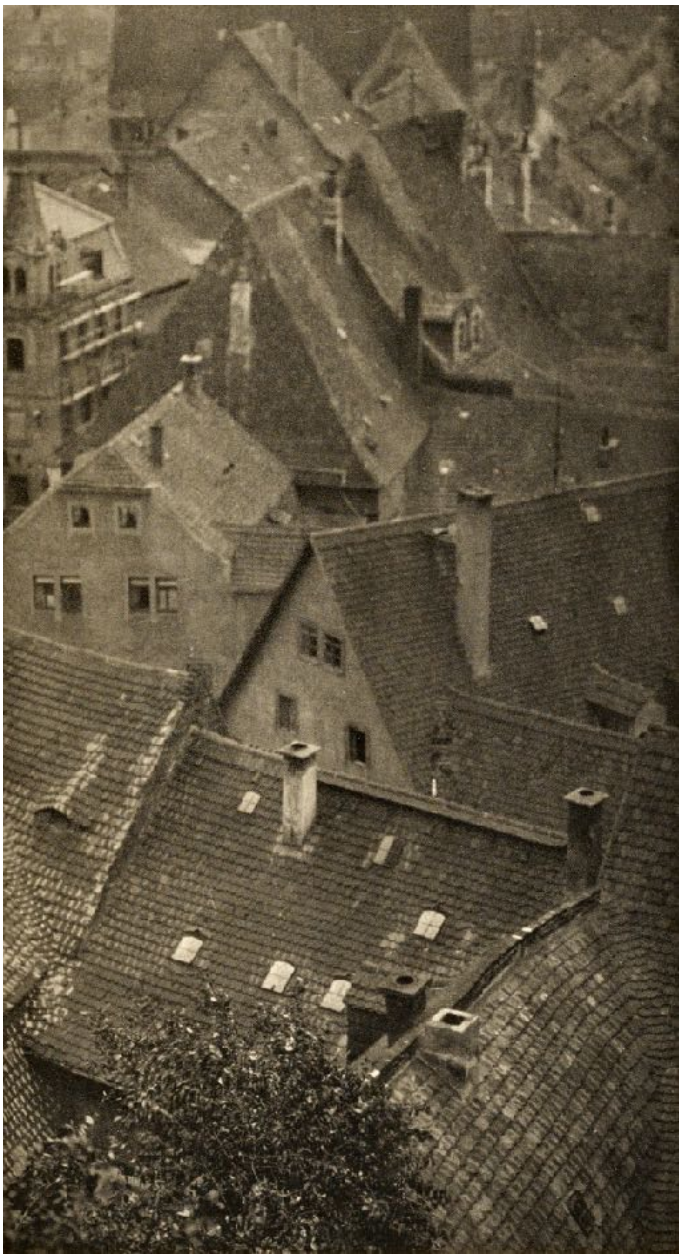

Figure 77. *Over the House Tops, Missen*, by Karl F. Struss, 1911.

correspondence between photography and cubism that de Zayas sought. Photographed with a long lens that compressed the field of view, the rooftops of the Missen houses appear to stack on top of one another.[178] The rooftops turn in various irregular angles. Those in the foreground are cut short by the edge of the frame, simulating the spilling-forward effect of the unusual rendering of perspective in Picasso's canvas. De Zayas's writings about *The Steerage* seem to suggest that photography could function in exactly this eye-opening way for viewers—almost as if a viewer could look at a photograph and a painting side by side in order to verify that the painter had indeed "seen" and recorded reality accurately. Like Struss's photograph, for de Zayas, *The Steerage* demonstrated that spatial relationships that might seem bizarre in a painting were plainly visible facts documented by the camera. In *The Steerage* people and objects that appeared to be stacked on top of one another, turned in various directions, and layered in front of one another. "The task accomplished by Stieglitz's photography has been to make objectivity understood for it has given it the true importance of a natural fact," de Zayas declared in *291.*[179] He believed that the camera could strip away the civilized mental analysis of "natural" visual facts because its mechanized vision was not necessarily dictated by pictorial conventions. Indeed a camera could not on its own guarantee images with meaningful visual hierarchy, coherent perspective, or intelligible narratives. Only the operator of the camera could coerce the machine to produce such idealized images. Therefore de Zayas believed that the modernist photographer aligned with primitivism's

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[178] A "long" lens, or lens with a large focal length, magnifies objects, allowing photographers to photograph at a longer distance from their subjects. It has the effect of making the horizon appear higher in the frame of the photograph, so that objects in the distance appear to be "on top" of objects in the foreground. It also reduces the perception of depth in the image so that objects in the foreground, middle ground, and background all appear to be close together.

[179] De Zayas, *291*.

naiveté was one who simply let the machine make images without imposing the pictorial conventions that had been contrived by civilized minds.

While this standpoint certainly played an initial role in Stieglitz's new understanding of photography and reinterpretation of *The Steerage*, the suggestion that his photograph displayed the camera's vision stripped of human intervention would not have resonated with Stieglitz. Whereas Stieglitz hoped *The Steerage* might verify his rightful place alongside Courbet and Cézanne, for de Zayas the artwork only earned Stieglitz a place as the handmaiden of such modern geniuses. Stieglitz's new gravure counteracted de Zayas's claim. The tones in the new print were more subtle with less contrast overall between the highlights and shadows. Several highlights—notably the gangplank, women's shawls, and baby bonnets—had been darkened, placing visual emphasis upon the brightness of the straw hat worn by the man on upper deck. At minimum this interpretation reflected the importance of the photographer's interpretive hand in altering machine-recorded visual facts into a modernist artwork. He believed that, like Cézanne's paintings, his photographs translated the artist's intuitive embodied sensation of the world into an organized system of planes.

However, Picasso's perception of *The Steerage* likely differed from that of both de Zayas and Stieglitz. De Zayas's conclusions about cubism drew upon several interviews with the painter at his studio between 1911 and 1914. Though de Zayas claimed to have a privileged understanding of cubism because the two artists were able to communicate to each other in their native Spanish, Picasso historian William Rubin notes that Picasso in fact resented the oversimplified analyses of cubism that de Zayas advanced.[180] Picasso's "understanding" of photography was also more complex than de Zayas's. As Baldassari

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[180] Rubin, "Picasso," 260n60-62.

Figure 78. *Photographic Composition: Still Life on a Pedestal Table,* by Pablo Picasso, 1911.

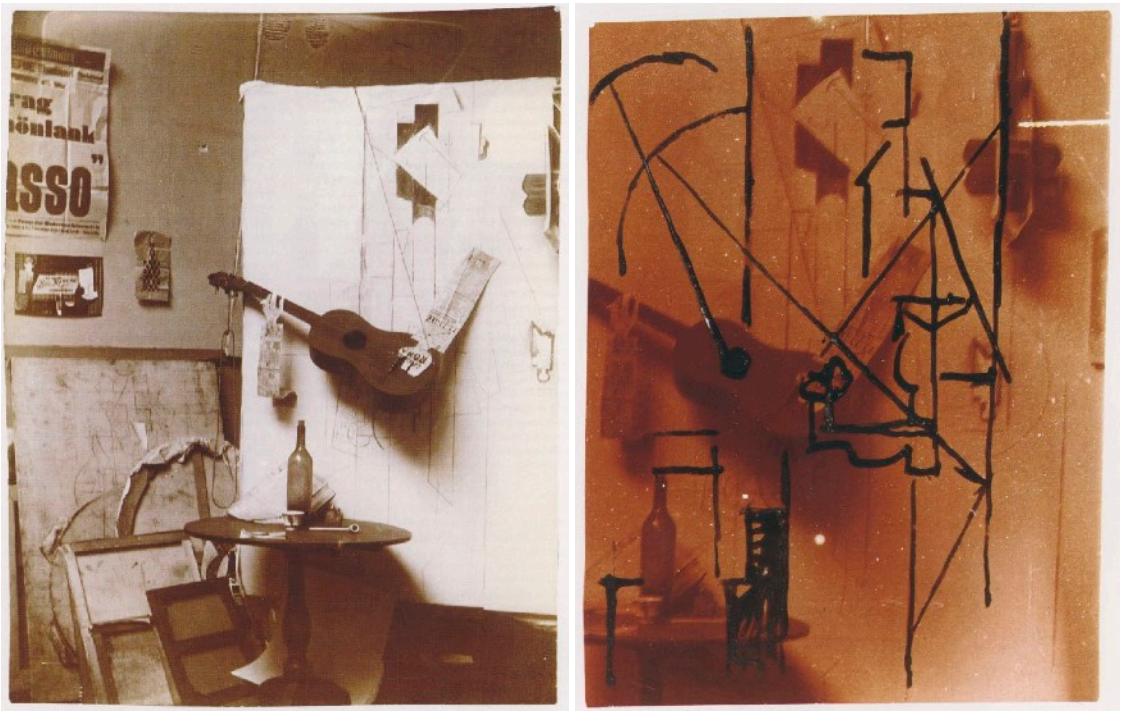

Figure 79. (left) *Photographic Composition with "Construction with Guitar Player,"* by Pablo Picasso, 1913; and (right) *Photographic Composition with "Construction with Guitar Player,"* by Pablo Picasso, 1913

argues, by 1914 Picasso's relationship to photography had significantly changed from his days at Horta. Picasso no longer used photographs simply as source material for poses, perspective, and spatial relationships. His "absolute entrance" into photography represented a much more complex process for developing his work by photographing artworks during intermediary stages of their completion.[181] By photographing his artworks together with ordinary objects and compositions made in the studio, Picasso was able to make objects serve dual purposes, separating their formal contribution to a composition from their ordinary modes of signification. For example, Picasso's studio photographs show how a wine bottle could become a guitarist's hand on the fret board in one instance (figure 78, 1911) and later the guitar might become the ear of a portrait (figure 79, 1913). Picasso's "entrance" into photography was therefore marked by his use of the medium to combine incongruous spatial and representational logics into a single picture plane.

Such mixtures likely referenced African objects such as Ivory Coast masks adorned with vernacular materials that were commonly found in Paris during the period.[182] The objects that Picasso favored during this period were ones that combined vernacular materials that marked the objects as distinctly homemade and unsophisticated.[183] For instance a Guere mask from Liberia (figure 80) combines wood, natural fibers, and bullet shell casings. On the Guere mask, the round ends of the shell casings form the hair on the head of the mask. The concentric circles imprinted on the butt ends of the casings accentuate the effect of tight curls of hair. In contrast shell

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[181] Baldassari, *Picasso and Photography*, 106-123.

[182] Rubin, "Picasso," 307-309.

[183] Rubin, 314.

Figure 80. Guere mask, Liberia, undated.

casings have been attached by their hollow ends around the rest of the circumference of the mask to make the form of facial hair protruding from the chin and cheeks. The shell-casings thus perform dual formal and signifying functions; as shapes they create the formal qualities of a European hair and beard, while as objects they signify the colonizer's violent presence. To Parisians who imagined that the African objects they encountered were ancient artifacts from cultures still untouched by modernity, these manufactured shell casings would have appeared out of place on the mask. Though the person who made the mask was likely intended to reference the bullets' significance to their local history—possibly from France's currently active expansion of control of the Ivory Coast through military force—French viewers at the time would have seen the inclusion of such modern detritus as a naive misunderstanding or misuse of the material. Consonant with racial theories about perception, it appeared as if the Guere maker did not distinguish bullets from natural materials such as wood or fiber because of their "primitive" lack of analytical skills. However, for modern European viewers who believed they "understood" the meaning of bullets, the mask appeared to be an incongruous mix of materials with layers of unintended meanings. It was this tension between the apparent naive use of objects for their formal characteristics and significance of their worldly meanings that Picasso reproduced by incorporating vernacular materials such as tablecloths, nails, broomsticks and rubber gloves into his analytical cubist work. Through photography Picasso figured out how to do what the Guere artist had done, placing vernacular materials and heterogeneous spatial logics into compositions that achieved a similar "crude" effect.[184] Picasso also treated the photograph naively as if he were a

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184 For discussion of Picasso's use of photography to place heterogeneous objects together, see Baldessari, *Picasso and Photography*, 106-123; for further discussion of Picasso's mixing of representational logics and messages, see Leighton, *The Liberation of Painting*, 128-138.

"primitive" who neither understood the appropriate use of materials nor adhered to a single unifying material or spatial logic. He drew upon its surface as if he was unaware that these acts would destroy the conventional representational logic of photography—the illusion that the photograph was itself a window into a coherent and believable reality. Picasso's photograph instead created formal relationships between a melange of differing materials residing upon different layers and scales of reality—the print surface, the real space of the studio, two dimensional drawings and paper within the studio—all leveled within the photographic plane.

Therefore, unlike de Zayas, for Picasso *The Steerage* would not have functioned to confirm an objective relationship between the photograph and cubism. When Picasso closely studied the 1911 gravure he likely discovered multiple "spaces" layered on top of each other. The upper deck alone contains two spaces within it; the row of people who hang over the railing appear to be "below" the row of men behind them under the horizontal mast. The distinct drop off in focus between the two layers of people makes them seem to belong to different spaces and representational logics. On the lower deck of the steerage are several incongruent spatial logics layered onto another like Picasso's photographic experiments. Each small grouping of individuals appears to belong to a separate layer due to their distance from the camera and the turn of their bodies while the bright afternoon sunlight streaming down from the left side of the frame gives each of these scenes its own distinction, highlighting the tops of covered heads and lending each figure differentiation from the forms behind it. The sunlight also defines the volume of the round cylinder of the paying-out machinery as if it were layered on top of the woman's body at the lower left of the image.[185] Like the bullet casings on the Guere mask

[185] Paying-out machinery was a system of rollers at the bow of the ship over which cables were coiled.

Figure 81. *Deck of Great Eastern, Aft: the Paying-out Machinery,* by Robert Charles Dudley, 1866. Paying-out machinery was a system of rollers at the bow of the ship over which cables were coiled.

whose significance as everyday objects was disavowed in favor of their formal characteristics, the fragmented sideways view of the paying-out machinery defamiliarized the ordinary nautical object (figure 81) turning it instead into an aesthetic volume. The cylinder floats in the foreground between the viewer and the scene as if governed by its own pictorial logic. By obstructing the view into the scene it also ruptures the logic of the photograph as a window upon the world it views. Several other familiar nautical objects in the image also serve as abstract forms that disrupt photography's typical representational logic, adding to the layering of the heterogeneous spatial and material logics. The contrasty lighting upon the differing three-dimensional angles of the gangplank, funnel, mast, railings, and stairs make them appear to both layer on top of each other and also jut forward in space toward the viewer at every side of the picture. The architecture of the ship therefore functions to make the photograph appear to be less a window into a reality before the camera's lens and more like a collaged space of various spatial and material realities in which the significance of everyday objects is eclipsed by the weight of their form and volume in the overall composition. The photograph therefore mirrored Picasso's own affinity for photography for its capacity to disrupt entirely the idea that the photograph offered any reliable view of reality.

Stieglitz's reinterpretation of *The Steerage* in 1915 does not appear to share Picasso's appreciation of such unorthodox uses of photography. The 1915 gravure exhibits a lower contrast overall between the highlights and shadows, helping to unify rather than distinguish the distinction between differing spatial logic. Most notably, the bright highlights that were equivalent to each other across the frame in the 1911 gravure, are all dampened down in the 1915 gravure, except for the straw hat which now stands out as the brightest highlight. While it is not known why Stieglitz made this choice, it

necessitates the question: What about the straw hat reflected Stieglitz's new evaluation of the photograph as his "favorite?" At minimum, this choice represents Stieglitz's distaste for the scattering of the viewer's attention across the picture plane and a desire to restore some amount of naturalism to the image by adding dimension and guiding the viewer's attention.

The emphasis on the hat also has two other notable effects that link it to his other *Camera Work* 36 photographs. First, the figure wearing the straw hat becomes a stand-in for the viewer, like the stand-ins that appear to guide the viewer's gaze in *Old and New New York* and *Excavating*. Another of Stieglitz's photographs—*The Ferry Boat*—makes clear that middle-class New Yorkers commonly wore straw hats during this time. Thus because the obscured face of the steerage passenger cannot be "read" for the phenotypical traits that might have marked him as a "foreign" immigrant, he is imaginably a stand-in for a middle-class viewer who is lodged in the midst of immigrant bodies on every side of him. Whereas, the mingling of various ancient races had once been out of place with Stieglitz's vision for picturesque New York, now their status on a modern ship at sea highlights their disconnection from the land and draws attention to their status as immigrants. They are not ancient races imagined to live as they had for millennia, but something new and strange—immigrants who are understood not to belong in the settlement. However, like skyscrapers and modern technology, they are a fact of the happenings of urban modernity as New York is increasingly a hub of international immigration.[186] The man in the straw hat stands for the embodied settler who senses modernity shifting and changing around him.

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[186] Libby Porter and Oren Yiftachel, "Urbanizing Settler-Colonial Studies: Introduction to the Special Issue," *Settler Colonial Studies* 9, no. 2 (December 11, 2017): 177.

Second, the emphasis on the hat serves to give it the most weight in the photograph. As with the complexes of settler temporality in Stieglitz's other photographs, this visual weight signifies a "pastness" that grounds settler narratives in twentieth-century modernity. It is the white settler who stands for pastness here. He anchors the settler's perspective as the American "native" who belonged to the settlement before the drastic changes of modernity, and who senses its changes as a "native" in its midst. *The Steerage,* thus like Stieglitz's contemporaneous images, serves as a usable past that uses settler primitivism to picture as intuitively "real" a collective memory of the settlement that smooths over the ideological aberrations of twentieth-century modernity, guiding American's visual perception along the deeply-rutted wagon-wheel tracks of indigenizing settler narratives.

Modernist photography here also becomes knit in with the spatial narrative of the frontier. The Atlantic ocean signified the spatial and temporal antecedent to the settlement—the ocean route by which its inhabitants arrive. *The Steerage* pictures the new modern reality of this route, just as his New York photographs and Brigman's California photographs span the settlement from East to West, from most to least developed, from most civilized to most wild.

It is notable in this regard, that it is in this moment that Stieglitz's photographs are finally regarded as making the bold steps that join photography with modernism. Stieglitz does not achieve this effect by simply making sharp photographs of the modern urban forms formerly unknown to art, but by also embedding within them a pastness that solidified the settler as both modern and indigenous. As a prominent element of America's collective memory, these photographs served to renew settler amnesia and more completely distance Indians from the modernizing settlement. The city is not only a

place where Indians seem utterly out of place, but also a symbol of the power, democracy, and innovation of the New World.[187] Stieglitz's efforts during this period to picture the city, to import modernism from Europe and California, and to squash dissenting groups of American photographers, placed him at the core of a hub of power in the world of modernist photography centered in Manhattan. And with these acts established the honesty of "straight" photography built upon a form of modernist primitivism in line with the settler's efforts to displace Indian's completely.

[187] Porter and Yiftachel, 177.

# Chapter Three: Settler Abstraction in the Skies above Lake George

During the 1920s and 1930s both Dorothy Norman and Herbert Seligmann transcribed Stieglitz's remembrances of the day he photographed *The Steerage*, published as "How *The Steerage* Happened" in Norman's journal *Twice a Year* (1942).[1] As the only first-hand account of the making of this pivotal image, Stieglitz's narrative seems to have the special quality of primary evidence. In it Stieglitz recalled his intense sense of identification with the third-class passengers in the ship's steerage accommodations, as well as his immediate recognition that he had made a groundbreaking modernist photograph. Though historians widely acknowledge the unlikelihood of many aspects of Stieglitz's narrative, they almost invariably rely upon some aspect of Stieglitz's account to color their analysis of the image rather than regard it as entirely suspect.[2] In distinction, by refraining from utilizing Stieglitz's own words to frame my analysis until this final chapter, I have aimed to reconstruct the historical contexts of *The Steerage*'s making to make legible the narrative's implausibility. I argue that this belated narrative must be understood as a settler usable past constructed in the context of Stieglitz's postwar milieu and philosophy of art.

During this period Stieglitz severed his ties with European modernists, aligning himself instead with American writers and visual artists commonly referred to collectively

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1 Seligmann's transcription is dated November 1, 1926. Herbert J. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking: Notes on Some of His Conversations, 1925-1931* (Yale University Press, 1966), 79-80; Alfred Stieglitz, "How *The Steerage* Happened," *Twice a Year*, no. 8/9 (1942): 127-131.

2 A notable divergence from this trend appears in Jason Francisco, Elizabeth Anne McCauley, and Anthony W. Lee, *The Steerage and Alfred Stieglitz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

as the Second Stieglitz Circle. This small group consisted of a core of artists—Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, John Marin, Paul Strand, and Georgia O'Keeffe—as well as writers Paul Rosenfeld, Waldo Frank, Sherwood Anderson, Herbert Seligman, Louis Kalonyme, Jean Toomer, and Dorothy Norman, as well as others on its periphery—Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford, Hart Crane, William Carlos Williams among them. During the war, the Circle frequently published stories and editorials in the short-lived *The Seven Arts* journal, dedicated to homegrown American arts. Wanda Corn's monograph on the Second Stieglitz Circle, *The Great American Thing,* details the group's nationalist goals to inspire a modern American renaissance capable of awakening common Americans to their innate greatness, encouraging citizens to abandon the tyranny of materialism and puritanism and embrace instead the idealized freedoms for which the nation was founded. Corn reveals how central nationality was to these artists, who used "America" almost as if it was a brand name, constantly invoking the American "soil" and "spirit" as the root of their modernist movement.[3] The Second Stieglitz Circle employed modernist visual and literary aesthetics in the service of usable past histories that naturalized their interpretation of American identity. According to Brooks, the past was "an inexhaustible storehouse" of "adaptable ideals" out of which the "creative mind" might shape a new "spiritual history of America" to be used in "the service of our future."[4] Warren Susman's described the Second Stieglitz Circle as a brand of artists and intellectuals characteristic of their era who sought to control Americans' perception of the

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[3] Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915-1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 16-20.

[4] Van Wyck Brooks, "On Creating a Usable Past," *The Dial* 64, no. 764 (April 11, 1918): 337-341.

past. They believed that present problems could be solved by looking to the past, and thus carefully crafted renderings of the past would steer America's course into the future.[5]

Stieglitz's *Steerage* narrative was typical of the circle's tautological usable pasts that intended to make settler origin myths relevant to modern American issues. By reading "How *The Steerage* Happened" alongside Stieglitz's account of the genesis of his *Equivalents* series (1922-1930) and the Circle's imagined origins of the "American race" this chapter brings to light how Stieglitz's 1907 image was ideologically transformed during the 1920s to signify the special qualities of the American settlement. I will read Stieglitz's origin story as a modernist usable past rooted in myths about the Revolutionary Era birth of the "American race." Such a reading highlights how the immigrants on the ship came to stand for an emergent conception of American whiteness that unified the disparate European "races" into a monolithic "spiritual" white American race. This chapter not only sheds light on the important ties between American modernist photography and settler colonialism, but in so doing makes legible the ways that settler colonial ideology continued to play a distinct role in historical shifts in the meanings of American whiteness decades after the closing of the frontier.

Revolutionary era notions regarding the innate qualities of the "American race" were salient for white Americans in the 1920s, as recent European immigrants became increasingly absorbed into white American identity. Both Philip J. Deloria and Alan Trachtenberg have illuminated how immigrants and white Americans looking back upon the Revolutionary era, drew upon symbolic Indians as a means of forging American identity, demonstrating that the "Indian," imagined as the "first American," was central

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[5] Warren I. Susman, "History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Usable Past," *American Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1964): 255-257.

to the era's revised understandings of "America" itself.[6] In seeking to shed light on how settler subjectivity shaped modernist photographic vision itself, I take a different approach. Stieglitz's own interest in the American Revolutionary War was no doubt stoked in part by his summers at his family's estate at Lake George. In the American imagination, it was at Lake George that settlers had decisively forged bonds of brotherhood with each other as they became aware of Britain's oppressive influence over their lives. This usable past was famously immortalized in art and literature of the nineteenth century by James Fenimore Cooper and Thomas Cole among others. During the later years of his career Stieglitz began to spend more of his time at Lake George, where he could be in touch with the American "soil." It was at Lake George that he made his *Equivalents* series, imbuing his images with the place's mythological history, in the hopes that modernist photography could inspire Americans to return to their spiritual roots. By bringing *Equivalents* and *The Steerage* into conversation with myths about the origins of American sovereignty and white identity, I demonstrate how eighteenth century myths about whiteness set the stage for American whiteness's flexibility as an ethereal rather than "biological" category of racial identity. The reemergence of these myths during the 1920s attests to the ongoing importance of settler colonialism to the vicissitudes of white American identity. Further, the appearance of elements of these myths in Stieglitz's stories regarding the making of his own photographs attests to the fact that modernist photography was intended to reignite these myths in the twentieth century.

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[6] Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 1-37; Alan Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha: Staging Indians, Making Americans, 1880-1930* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 1-14, 51-169.

As I explore below, a central belief about the innate qualities of whiteness that reemerged during the 1920s was the notion of "capacity for self-governance," which appeared at the core of legal and popular definitions of citizenship in both eras. I examine how the notion of self-governance was adapted from the Haudenosaunee Confederacy's political philosophy, reading American art and literature alongside Indigenous origin stories and visual culture. For the Haudenosaunee, the capacity for self-governance was also central to conceptions of Indigenous personhood. The Haudenosaunee did not regard this capacity as inborn, but as a quality that required deliberate training and sustained practice. Settlers' conception of self-governance was likewise also the product of education, despite their persistent myth that it was an innate quality of their race; the Haudenosaunee had deliberately educated settlers on self-governance as a key to the terms by which whites might hope to become citizens of the continent if they wished to make it their permanent home.

The fact that Lake George also occupied an important place in Haudenosaunee culture allows me to bring Haudenosaunee philosophy and visual culture to bear on an examination of Stieglitz's *Equivalents.* As settler and Indigenous beliefs crisscross over the same territories and histories, the devastating logics of settler ideology come to light. The conception of self-governing personhood central to Haudenosaunee political philosophy was adopted only selectively by settlers, who maintained an imaginary shell of its moral qualities while claiming that their virtuousness justified the appropriation of lands and extraction of resources. Stieglitz, inspired to make his photographs by witnessing the extinction of an American tree species on his family estate, did not discern extinction as a mishap of settler land management, but instead an opportunity to reinvigorate myths of the spiritual connection between settler self-possession and occupied territory. His

abstract photographs thus resumed the nineteenth-century photographic tradition of assessing the settlement's natural resources, in a particularly modernist way.

Though Stieglitz's *Equivalents* seem at first glance miles away from *The Steerage*—made on the land rather than the sea, picturing the sky rather than people, sparse rather than crowded, and made two decades apart—I argue that Stieglitz imbued his 1920s reconfiguration of *The Steerage* with the ardent nationalist feelings that animated his cloud photographs. Stieglitz's stories of this period described photography as quintessentially American—a humble ordinary form of representation that anyone could make or understand. It was an art by and for the "common people" that accorded with the founding spirit of the nation. Accordingly it was also imagined as an art capable of returning the nation back to its spiritual roots. The mythos of the settler's origins thus became canonized in the history of photography as the origin story of modernist photography itself.

## How "How *The Steerage* Happened" Happened

In the essays collected in The Steerage *and Alfred Stieglitz,* Jason Francisco, Elizabeth Anne McCauley, and Anthony W. Lee analyze in detail Stieglitz's narrative regarding the making of *The Steerage,* uncovering its many fallacies and unlikelihoods. The authors fact check and situate Stieglitz's narrative within surrounding photographic discourses. My analysis builds upon this work by further analyzing Stieglitz's narrative within the context of the Second Stieglitz Circle's nationalist goals for art. Though "How *The Steerage* Happened" is lengthy, I find it worthwhile to bring it into full view for

analysis by reprinting a large portion of it below. Stieglitz opens his narrative with apparently verifiable facts: it was June of 1907 when the Stieglitzes departed New York for Paris on the state-of-the-art *Kaiser Wilhelm II*. While this fact appears to vouch for the accuracy of his recollection, it is itself tellingly erroneous: Stieglitz departed New York in May.[7] He goes on to describe himself as an unwilling passenger on the voyage to Paris, disgusted by the affectation of the first-class passengers. He escapes their company to discover the refreshing sight of the steerage passengers, who now represent for him "the common people." Even Stieglitz's statement that he was alone on the deck was likely false, as first-class passengers commonly found entertainment in watching and throwing treats to the immigrants gathered below.[8] That such small details were revised in the story's telling signal the ideological function each detail might similarly serve:

> Early in June 1907, my small family and I sailed for Europe. My wife insisted upon going on the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*—the fashionable ship of the North German Lloyd at the time. Our first destination was Paris. How I hated the atmosphere of the first class on that ship. One couldn't escape the *nouveaux riches*.
>
> I sat much in my steamer chair the first days out—sat with closed eyes. In this way I avoided seeing the faces that would give me the cold shivers, yet those voices and that English—ye gods!
>
> On the third day out I finally couldn't stand it any longer. I had to get away from that company. I went as far forward on deck as I could. The

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[7] Stieglitz's voyage more likely took place in May 1907. Beaumont Newhall, "Alfred Stieglitz: Homeward Bound," *Art News* 87, no. 3 (March 1988): 141-142.

[8] Edward A. Steiner, *On the Trail of the Immigrant* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906), 41.

sea wasn't particularly rough. The sky was clear. The ship was driving into the wind—a rather brisk wind.

As I came to the end of the desk [sic] I stood alone, looking down. There were men and women and children on the lower deck of the steerage. There was a narrow stairway leading up the upper deck of the steerage, a small deck right at the bow of the steamer.

To the left was an inclining funnel and from the upper steerage deck there was fastened a gangway bridge which was glistening in its freshly painted state. It was rather long, white and during the trip remained untouched by anyone.

On the upper deck, looking over the railing, there was a young man with a straw hat. The shape of the hat was round. He was watching the men and women and children on the lower steerage deck. Only men were on the upper deck. The whole scene fascinated me. I longed to escape from my surroundings and join those people.

A round straw hat, the funnel leading out, the stairway leaning right, the white drawbridge with its railings made of circular chains—white suspenders crossing on the back of a man in the steerage below, round shapes of iron machinery, a mast cutting into the sky, making a triangular shape. I stood spellbound for a while, looking and looking. Could I photograph what I felt, looking and looking and still looking? I saw shapes related to each other. I saw a picture of shapes and underlying that the feeling I had about life. And as I was deciding, should I try to put down this seemingly new vision that held me,—people, the common

people, the feeling of ship and ocean and sky and the feeling of release that I was away from the mob called the rich,—Rembrandt came into my mind and I wondered would he have felt as I was feeling.

Spontaneously I raced to the main stairway of the steamer, chased down to my cabin, got my Graflex, raced back again all out of breath, wondering whether the man with the straw hat had moved or not. If he had, the picture I had seen would no longer be. The relationship of shapes as I wanted them would have been disturbed and the picture lost. But there was the man with the straw hat. He hadn't moved. The man with the crossed white suspenders showing his back, he too, talking to a man, hadn't moved, and the woman with the child on her lap, sitting on the floor, hadn't moved. Seemingly no one had changed position.

I had but one plate holder with one unexposed plate. Would I get what I saw, what I felt? Finally I released the shutter. My heart thumping. I had never heard my heart thump before. Had I gotten my picture? I knew if I had, another milestone in photography would have been reached, related to the milestone of my *Car Horses* made in 1892 [also known as *The Terminal*], and my *Hand of Man* made in 1902, which had opened up a new era of photography, of seeing. In a sense it would go beyond them, for here would be a picture based on related shapes and on the deepest human feeling, a step in my own evolution, a spontaneous discovery.[9]

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[9] Alfred Stieglitz, "How *The Steerage* Happened," *Twice a Year*, nos. 8-9 (1942):127-131.

Stieglitz establishes his own identity as reflected by the humble immigrants whose authenticity provide him with a transformative spiritual experience that results in the pioneering of new ground in photography. The narrative contains many of the structuring elements common to settler colonial usable pasts. Stieglitz structures his narrative as a transformative journey to the frontier that establishes his own settler identity as authentic and humble in contrast to the pretensions of Europe. He opens the narrative by portraying himself as a reluctant passenger traveling, on his wife's insistence, in the first-class accommodations of a "fashionable" ocean liner. He is viscerally repelled by the foreign sounding accents and affectations of the *nouveaux riches.* As Lorenzo Veracini describes, certain repeated narrative forms distinguish settler colonial from colonial histories.[10] Unlike colonial narratives which establish the colonial self in distinction from the racialized Other, settler colonial narratives have a triangular set of Others—both indigenous people and the originating nations. Similar to the constantly and anxiously repeated colonial racial binary, settler narratives construe Europe as a threat repeatedly found within the settlement encroaching upon American freedoms. Such sustained threats perform the ideological work of establishing white Americans as belonging and "indigenous" to the settlement in distinction from those who do not belong. Even after the independence of settlement has been established, signs of European influence are believed to indicate that European power still has a stronghold on the minds of settlers—imposing an internalized cultural hierarchy. The ongoing presence

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[10] Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 96.

of Europeans and their customs serves to continually reinforce a belief in the freedoms of the settlement in contrast to the constraints of the Old World.[11]

Stieglitz and his milieu believed that European conventions were artificial and contrived. The presence of European conventions within the nation imposed destructive self-doubt upon their fellow Americans, restricting their capacity to express themselves, and thus inhibiting the development of a true American art, free from the oppressive forces of Europe. In *The Seven Arts*, Harold Stearns described American art as "A Poor Thing But Our Own," lamenting the restraining effect European conventions imposed upon American artists:

> "They are frightened into furtive imitations of what they have been told is correct in an older and more sophisticated tradition; they are ashamed of that portion of their work which is truly American as flippant or shoddy and hide it."[12]

The Second Stieglitz Circle discouraged American artists from traveling overseas, encouraging them to make homegrown art. Though Stieglitz had in fact traveled to Paris motivated by his desire to learn from European artists in 1907, by the 1920s such a desire came to represent the devastating force of Europe manifest within the American self. Stieglitz's account of his disinclination toward the artifice of European conventions therefore established both the settler narrative conflict characteristic of American origin stories and also revised history to make it seem as if Stieglitz himself had never been such an American.

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[11] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism,* 33-34, 98; On the anxious repetition of colonial racial narratives see Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 66-84.

[12] Harold Stearns, "A Poor Thing But Our Own," *The Seven Arts* 1, no. 5 (March 1917): 516-518.

In the story, Stieglitz's visceral distaste for the restraining self-hatred he hears in "those voices and that English" drives him to the furthest end of the ship where he finally experiences freedom by identifying with the common folk of the third-class deck. This journey was also characteristic of the structural format of settler usable pasts. Unlike colonial narratives that feature a circular narrative in which the colonist ventures to the dark colony and finally returns home, the settler does not return to Europe but instead makes himself at home in the colony. Settler narratives are one-way pioneering adventures onto an uncultivated frontier. Even though settler narratives are geographically one-way journeys, they are also metaphorically portrayed as a spiritual "return" to conditions of freedoms that were denied in the Old World.[13] As Veracini describes, "settlers construe their very movement forward as a 'return' to something that was irretrievably lost: a return to the land, but also a return to an Edenic condition, to a Golden Age of unsurrendered freedoms."[14] Though *The Steerage* was in fact made during Stieglitz's own 1907 "colonial return" to Europe, he reframed his journey as a metaphorical one-way pioneering journey away from European pretension and *toward* American freedom. Stieglitz "went as far forward on deck as [he] could," following a frontier narrative structure. Like the protagonist of settler frontier narratives he journeys "alone." As he becomes distanced from the oppressive force of European imitation, he experiences the truth of embodied sensation in the refreshing contact with the natural elements of wind and sea, suggesting the freedom of the frontier in which the settler forges his lone spiritual relationship with nature. The Second Stieglitz Circle portrayed this as an uninhibited relationship with nature enjoyed uniquely by the hardy and simple

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[13] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 96-99.

[14] Veracini, 98.

people of America who "[learned] wisdom from the trees, the brooks, the beasts and birds, and from lowly labor."[15] Contact with the frontier was portrayed as a spiritual experience that transforms the settler by bringing forward the settler's true self.

In "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Frederick Jackson Turner described the frontier as the means by which European immigrants had initially been transformed into Americans. "The frontier promoted the formation of a composite nationality for the American people," he observed. "In the crucible of the frontier the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither nationality nor characteristic."[16] Veracini describes the function of such mythologies to ideologically "indigenize" the settler to the colonial territory.[17] Turner described such indigenizing in contact with the frontier:

> "The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs and Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick."[18]

By transforming and indigenizing the settler to the national territory, the frontier was understood to be the terrain through which any kind of commonality could be

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[15] "The American," *The Seven Arts* 1, no. 6 (April 1917): 555-556.

[16] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 22-23.

[17] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism,* 42-47.

[18] Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 4.

found between disparate European cultures that settled North America, becoming "fused" together in a "mixed race" characterized by "coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness."[19]

At the moment of Stieglitz's transformative experience at the bounds of the frontier, several settler "origin" events occur. His own transformation is mirrored by his identification with immigrants who are themselves undergoing transformation in their status as immigrants. This merging of origin moments in turn produces a discovery for modernist photography. Within the context of the Second Stieglitz Circle, the immigrants on the *Kaiser Wilhelm II* were construed as the humble pioneers of the era, severed from Europe and willing to brave the untamed wilderness of American slums for the chance to be free. Their poverty was imagined as a form of primitivity. It marked them as outcasts from Europe, signifying their freedom from the artifice of worn-out conventions and therefore a refreshing connection with authentic human instincts and emotions. Recent European immigrants came to be seen as a reflection of settlers' own past, the moment when they had been purely engaged in the struggle to survive on the frontier, before the forces of capitalism had made Americans materialistic and disconnected from their spiritual roots. Stieglitz's origins narrative paralleled *The Seven Arts* editors' description of the role of artists to rediscover the "source" of settler subjectivity in their unsigned "The American." The article described the creation of the nation springing forth from "the shock of a common awakening" when Americans discovered that they were "merely a horde of shuffled races, fattening on the slaughter of Europe, with no purpose of our own." This rehearsed the usable past of the Revolutionary era in which settlers had been oppressed by their dependence upon

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[19] Turner, 37.

Europe, awakening to the fact that, though they initially belonged to distinct "races," the frontier had transformed them into a new race. This "racial" awareness precipitated settlers' uniting together in the pursuit of independence. *The Seven Arts* tasked artists to mirror this common purpose by "grop[ing] backward for that central source of our existence, that unity of life from which we were sprung."[20] Stieglitz's usable past history was such a groping. His narrative was a forward-oriented "return" to the immigrants who themselves represented the settlers' past. Before Stieglitz's camera their disparate races are united as the "common people" with whom he shares the common pursuit for freedom from Europe.

The frontier experience was thought to transform settlers to become their preexisting true selves by rousing "primitive" instincts and sincere emotion that had once been restrained by European artifice. Stieglitz's story spills over with such emotions in connection with the immigrants—longing, intense feelings about life, the urge to join them. His feelings quicken his own primitive instincts as "the feeling I had about life" inspires his reflex to "spontaneously" "race" and "chase" through the first class cabin in a way that would have certainly appeared uncouth to the wealthy occupants of the steamer. The resulting image thus becomes the product of Stieglitz's own intense feelings and unfettered instincts born of his contact with the elemental feeling of the frontier and his feeling of brotherhood with the primitive immigrant-settlers.

Such a narrative was notably distinct from his previous perceptions of immigrants and art photography explored in the chapters above. If he had initially rejected *The Steerage* in 1907, perceiving in the image a heterogeneous jumble of various "ancient" European ethnicities set incongruously against the backdrop of the new-fangled

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[20] "The American," 555-556.

architecture of the ship; now the immigrants represented something else. Their status as a "horde of shuffled races" served to confirm their Americanness rather than to mark them as Other. They represented a more "pure" prior form of Americanness before industry and materialism had tainted them with artifice and glutton. Their distinction from the modern form of the ship only served to confirm the relevance of settler origin stories in the present day, seeming to breathe life and hope into the idea that there continued to be "true" pioneers arriving to the United States. His new perception accorded with the frequent entreaties of the Second Stieglitz Circle for artists to help Americans awaken to their unity as great but humble people.

Stieglitz's milieu believed that Americans' greatness stemmed from the very fact of their lack of awareness of it—for the common folk of the nation were perceived to be authentic primitives who, by virtue of their primitivity, lacked self-consciousness, artifice, and affectation. In *The Seven Arts*, James Oppenheim posed the "purity" of the affected European arts to the "purity" of Americans:

> "In the aristocracy of culture, in the high-brow circles, there is abundance of fine work: especially art of the 'pure' type—pure music cleansed of the dirt of thinking and image, pure painting thrice-purged of the 'story' and the 'picture,' pure novels with melodrama and incident burnt out, pure poetry all wrought of images and combed clean of sentiment and thought. But as Shaw probably said, purity is for the pure. And so most of the species is excluded.

> However, this onset of 'purism' is not confined to the aristocracy: it also reaches to the democracy. Here is purity of another sort. Pure trash, pure vulgarity, if you will, but—pure."[21]

Oppenheim described the democratic purity of common Americans as one of "vitality," "adventure," "snap," "sensation," "actuality," "heart-throbs," and "common desire."[22] The art enjoyed by common people was thus portrayed as the stuff of instinct and emotion. This was premised as a kind of white American primitivity cleansed of Europe's traditions and artifice. Second Stieglitz Circle usable pasts proposed that upon contact with the American soil, pioneers had to become like primitives in order to survive, cleansing them of everything civilized and European. This process indigenized white settlers to the continent and produced a distinctly American "pure trash" culture that was their true common heritage.

Stieglitz's *Steerage* narrative imbued his photograph with this kind of purity. Now the photograph was meant to embody his deepest feelings about life. Importantly he now claimed that the abstract modern forms—the "round" and "triangular," the "leaning," "crossing," and "cutting" shapes—were an embodiment of his deepest feelings about life. They were both the raw forms of "common people" also the intense shapes, shadows, and highlights that matched both the humility and intensity of his true interiority. As Oppenheim clarifies, artificial art is made by people who pretend to "have no under-parts," and repress "the vulgar passions, the primitive instincts, and all that is brutal, sordid, ridiculous, absurd and cheap." He urged artists: "Extremely significant for our future, then, is the emergence in America of the so-called 'new poetry.' From the older,

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[21] James Oppenheim, editor's statement, *The Seven Arts* 1, no. 2 (December 1916): 153-154.

[22] Oppenheim, editor's statement, 153-154.

the New England standpoint, it lacks refinement, gracefulness and respectability. But it is a vital growth from below upwards."[23] *The Steerage* was reconfigured to match Oppenheim's requirements. Just as Oppenheim brings together the settler's "underparts" with an art that grows "from below" so Stieglitz brought together his own passionate inner life with his view on the passengers below him.

Though this was also proposed as a form of primitivism that drew upon stereotypes of working-class people, by the 1920s Stieglitz's conception of primitivism was more ostensibly distinct from European modernist primitivism. Peter Minuit stated of Stieglitz in *The Seven Arts*, "He will tell you that he was the first in America to exhibit Cézanne, but that today, he would like to put his foot through every one of his pictures. For Cézanne has become a subject of imitation."[24] The editorial in the same issue clarified:

> "Modern art has become, for many artists, self-conscious and intellectual. The artist has longed to be a scientist: to make the exact description, to be psychologist or sociologist, to construct his work according to a predetermined theory. The painter who says he will go deliberately back 25,000 years to the archaic and primitive, is applying an intellectual process to creative work."[25]

The very connections between the science of psychology and art that Stieglitz had drawn a decade prior were thus renounced, marking a radical reinterpretation of *The Steerage* and the terms by which photography might be a properly *American* modern art.

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[23] Oppenheim, 155-156.

[24] Peter Minuit, "291 Fifth Avenue," *The Seven Arts* 1, no. 1 (November 1916): 56.

[25] James Oppenheim, editor's statement, *The Seven Arts* 1, no. 1, 56.

However at the turning point in the scene when Stieglitz's interior experience of sensation turns to "spontaneous" action, he thinks of Rembrandt. Though European, Rembrandt represented a refreshing distance from the "theories" of European primitive modernists—a distance marked by a sincerity and empathy with the human condition that was out of step with broader trends in European art of his time. To Stieglitz's milieu this reference to the seventeenth century Dutch painter likely conjured Rembrandt's role as a folk hero of the Munich Secession in Germany. After World War I Stieglitz was kept abreast of the Munich Secession by Marsden Harley, the only Second Stieglitz Circle painter to continue to work in Europe, inspired by the folk arts movements in Germany. The Munich Secession painted mystical scenes of rural life, guided Julius Langbehn's *Rembrandt as Educator* (1890) which they regarded as the "bible" of their reform movement. Similar to the Second Stieglitz Circle's embellished usable pasts, Langbehn's *Rembrandt as Educator* falsely presented Rembrandt as a *German* painter whose folk-centered, simple, religious style had the capacity to inspire spiritual reformation in Germany and revitalize its national culture. Langbehn claimed that great art must spring from the Volk and from the native soil.[26] This characterization of Rembrandt fit well within the Second Stieglitz Circle's desire for a modern American primitivist folk art capable of uplifting the nation.

By likening his own art to Rembrandt's, Stieglitz also portrayed himself as a folk hero—a role that the Second Stieglitz Circle believed the modern artist should occupy in American society. The Second Stieglitz Circle frequently referred to artists and to Stieglitz

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[26] Donna Cassidy, *Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, 2005), 181; Maria Martha Makela, *The Munich Secession: Art and Artists in Turn-Of-The-Century Munich* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 56, 78-79; Correspondence between Stieglitz and Marsden Hartley, box 22, Alfred Stieglitz and Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. (Hereafter YCAL)

himself as national "prophets." In *America and Alfred Stieglitz,* a book devoted to Stieglitz written by members of his circle, Norman wrote, "Stieglitz's words become living experiences. They preoccupy you. They beat within you. They are added to you, the way a sunset is added to you."[27] Other contributors called Stieglitz "the tip of the arrow of the direction in which our nature is working move," and a "revolutionary" in whom were contained "those ancient elements of the spirit that cannot with impunity be denied; that make history and that press forward into the future."[28] Their sentimental estimation of Stieglitz placed him at the center of their cause. The Second Stieglitz Circle regarded American artists as everyday heroes whose art would awaken common Americans to their own greatness and thus uplift the nation into an American renaissance. Oppenheim proclaimed, "We are living in the first days of a renascent period, a time which means for America the coming of that national self-consciousness which is the beginning of greatness." The arts were central to the creation of such a self-consciousness as "not only the expression of the national life but a means to its enhancement."[29]

The modern art that the Second Stieglitz Circle imagined was one that was particularly American in its primitivity by drawing upon the arts made and enjoyed by common Americans. They celebrated "art of vitality and sensation" that "lacks refinement, gracefulness and respectability," but "includes vulgarity and passionate aspiration," so that it might "break through the class-crusts, to be assimilated back into

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[27] Dorothy Norman, "An American Place," in *America and Alfred Stieglitz: A Collective Portrait*, Louis Mumford et al., Revised edition (New York: Aperture, 1975), 69. Originally published in 1934.

[28] Evelyn Howard, "The Significance of Stieglitz for the Philosophy of Science," in *America and Alfred Stieglitz,* 102; Waldo Frank, "The New World in Stieglitz," *America and Alfred Stieglitz,* 110; Herbert J. Seligmann, "291: A Vision Through Photography," *America and Alfred Stieglitz,* 66.

[29] Oppenheim, editor's statement, *The Seven Arts* 1, no. 1, 52.

the universal experience of life, to take again the leadership toward the future."[30] In other words, by speaking an aesthetic language of the American folk, modern art could raise awareness among Americans of their greatness and inspire them to see themselves as a great and united people. As Romain Rolland explained to American artists in *The Seven Arts*, artists played a central role in saving the nation from its materialist demise. Because the American people were by their nature too primitive and humble to be aware of their own greatness (as well as duped into thinking that all great art came from Europe), they required artists to create aesthetic reflections that would awaken them into such a self-consciousness. "Since they cannot express themselves, they cannot know themselves. You must be their Voice. You must let them hear you speak, in order that they may grow conscious of their own existence. Give voice to your own soul, and you will find that you have given birth to the soul of your people."[31] Stieglitz's telling of the making of *The Steerage* accorded to this conception of voice, by portraying the forms of common people as suffused with Stieglitz's own deepest feelings about life. Its primitivism and defiance of convention became reconfigured as a revolutionary act.

Within each artist was believed to be a primitive interiority that could birth a uniquely American art. As Oppenheim explained, because Americans did not have centuries of established aesthetic traditions to draw upon, modern American art did not have a unified aesthetic like European art. Instead, Americans' traditions lay inside each artist's primitive interiority: "[The American artist] has only really to go to himself, to descend the inner stairway of the ages, to go down layer beneath layer of his human

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[30] Oppenheim, editor's statement, *The Seven Arts* 1, no. 2, 154-156.

[31] Romain Rolland, "America and the Arts," trans. Waldo Frank, *Seven Arts* 1, no. 1 (November 1916): 48-49

nature, to tap the stored heritage of the life of man."[32] Settler primitivist art-making was imagined as a frontier journey both inward and homeward to the true self. Its artistic products were imagined both as the expression of the American folk and also of each artist's individual soul. It was not united by a particular aesthetic, but instead by a common feeling of Americanness—imagined as a humble spiritual connection shared between a people, a land, and their nationhood.

Though Stieglitz and his milieu were concerned with the uplift of white Americans, they were not at all sympathetic to the concerns of eugenics. In believing that American art was not defined by a common aesthetic technique, but instead by a common goal of uplifting the nation through the expression of each artist's unique voice, Stieglitz and his milieu merged American art with a different, but foundational concept of American whiteness. For the Second Stieglitz Circle American art, like the different European races that made up the "American race," was not bound together "biologically" and tending toward unified ideals of beauty like the eugenicists believed, but instead bound together by something more ethereal: their souls. Their opposition to the repressive dictates of "race hygiene" landed them at the more progressive end of the spectrum of whites' beliefs about race in their day.

Opposition to eugenicists accounting of whiteness was more widespread than is commonly recounted today, producing considerable public debate in the early twentieth century.[33] Settler colonial historians observe that frequent disagreements over the definition and legislation of whiteness are characteristic of settler societies. The racial histories of settler nations feature recurring population management strategies that arise

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[32] James Oppenheim, editor's statement, *The Seven Arts* 1, no. 3 (January 1917): 268.

[33] Gregory D. Smithers, *Science, Sexuality, and Race in the United States and Australia, 1780–1940* (University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 287-291.

to cleanse a rotating roster of Others from society, selectively choosing who must be deported, selectively assimilated, or segregated from the settlement.[34] These issues must be understood as arising from the fact that settler nations do not "naturally" or historically "belong" on their occupied territories, but instead subscribe to ideas about the special characteristics of settler subjectivity that unified settlers to each other and the land. The special dimensions of "authentic" settler identity can therefore frequently become a topic of disagreement between various factions of the population. Authentic settler subjectivity is often thought to emanate from a particular location or lifestyle or dimension of the body politic.[35]

Conflicting views about whiteness exhibited by the Second Stieglitz Circle and the American eugenics movement might therefore be regarded as indicative of a larger ongoing settler clash about authentic settler identity. At the center of these two groups' disagreement was the figure of the poor white American, who embodied ongoing settler debates regarding who was reformable or assimilable and who was unalterably exogenous. The eugenicists dubbed many poor white Americans as "feebleminded" "idiots" and "morons" who they believed to be genetically inferior to racially "fit" white Americans. Their calls for quarantines and sterilization reflected the view that some poor whites were not only irreformable and unassimilable into proper settler lifestyles, but that they were the most threatening to America's racial hygiene because they appeared outwardly to look

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[34] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 26-33.

[35] Veracini, 62.

like "fit" whites.[36] However, for Stieglitz's milieu it was poor whites' very immunity to eugenics reformation that made them ideal American citizens. Sherwood Anderson's novel *Poor White* about ordinary poor white Americans featured a "half-wit" town hero Allie Mulberry whose irreformable simplemindedness made him an honest and skilled craftsman capable of helping his community.[37] Mulberry was one of many poor white characters portrayed but the Second Stieglitz Circle as sincere, humble, instinctual, unfettered, and emotional. That the eugenicists deemed them unfit and irreformable only increased their appeal to the Stieglitz milieu. It proved to them that true Americans could not be coaxed out of their honest, simple, and instinctual ways by moralizing propaganda or materialist desire. Their incorrigibility seemed to confirm the possibility that there was such a thing as a "natural" or "true" American and their rural poverty confirmed that contact with the American "soil" had something to do with their purity and resilience.

The Second Stieglitz Circle believed that by celebrating poor whites, they might coax Americans to admire the humble heroes among them and abandon the evils of materialism and puritanism. The popularity of the eugenics movement therefore threatened their hopes of national uplift. Both groups believed they were crusading for the future of the nation. However Stieglitz's milieu regarded the eugenics craze as an unfortunate regression of American society toward puritanism and away from the recent gains of sexual liberation that were more in line with the naturalness and virility they attributed to settler subjectivity. As one writer in *The Seven Arts* lamented,

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[36] Francis Galton, "The Possible Improvement of the Human Breed: Under the Existing Conditions of Law and Sentiment," *Essays in Eugenics* (London: The Eugenics Education Society, 1909), 1-17; Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 76-78, 167-168; See also Henry Herbert Goddard, *The Kallikak Family: A Study in Feeblemindedness* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912).

[37] Sherwood Anderson, *Poor White* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1920), 47-48, 115.

> "Just when convention seemed to be on the run, and youth seemed to be facing a sane and candid attitude towards sex, we find idealistic girls and men coming out of the colleges to tell us of our social responsibility towards the race.[…] our thirst towards love-experience is to be discouraged and turned aside into a concern for racial perfection. That is, we are subtly persuaded against merely growing widely and loving intensely."[38]

The Stieglitz circle's embrace of sexuality in opposition to the "purity" and "racial perfection" sought by the eugenicists certainly made them progressive for their era. They likewise opposed the idea of hygienic marriage on the basis of their opposition to the homogenous society that might produce. As editor of *The Seven Arts* James Oppenheim argued:

> The path of evolution lies through the variation, not through the average. […] We must then speculate a little further, and venture the hypothesis that variations do exist; that artists, and such unusual folk, are born, not made. They come into the world with that difference in them which makes adaptation difficult.[39]

They therefore deeply identified with the poor whites targeted by the eugenicists in their belief that they were similarly irreformable and representative of a way forward for the nation.

An early twenty-first century audience might certainly appreciate the ways that the Second Stieglitz Circle envisioned a future for the nation that was more egalitarian,

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[38] Randolph S. Bourne, "The Puritan's Will to Power," *The Seven Arts* 1, no. 6 (April 1917): 631.

[39] James Oppenheim, editor's statement, *The Seven Arts* 1, no. 4 (February 1917): 392-393.

environmentalist, and sexually liberated. They not only regarded industrialization, classism, and prudishness as detrimental to the nation, but attempted to bring forth a nation that centered on the arts and the celebration of a simple life. The Stieglitz Circle artists saw art as a remedy for a nation headed toward destruction. It seems imaginable that if their movement had been fruitful in the way they imagined that the twenty-first century's climate catastrophes, immigration crises, and class disparities might have been avoided. However the liberation they imagined was necessarily limited by their white racial perspective and settler colonial context. Their modernism constructed a vision for America's future by looking to misty narratives regarding the nation's founding. It thus revitalized and made modern the very usable pasts that concealed genocide and dispossession behind portrayals of virtue and the spiritual relationship between settlers, the land, and each other.

## The Dying Chestnut and the Rekindling of Settler Whiteness

In 1922 Stieglitz began making photographs of the clouds over his family's estate at Lake George, believing that he had finally found a way for modernist photography to serve the goals of national uplift envisioned by the Second Stieglitz Circle. Over the next decade he made approximately 350 of these photographs, which he eventually dubbed *Equivalents* because they were the visual "equivalent" of his feelings about life itself. The *Equivalents* have been extensively analyzed by Stieglitz historians because of Stieglitz's own claim that they consolidated "what [he] had learned in 40 years about

photography."[40] As Stieglitz was known to embellish and rewrite facts in retrospect, we might instead understand this statement as expressing the idea that Stieglitz wished for his own oeuvre to be analyzed in retrospect with the cloud photographs as the necessary and tautological culmination of more than four decades of image-making. That Stieglitz also dictated the origin story of *The Steerage* during the time that he made the *Equivalents* should thus be understood in light of the fact that Stieglitz wished to draw a connection between his "first" modernist photograph and the more recent photographs that aligned with the principles of modernism he held to be true during the 1920s.

Accordingly the origin story he wrote for the *Equivalents* sheds light on his 1920s understanding of *The Steerage.* Written in 1923, "How I Came to Photograph Clouds" shared similarities to "How *The Steerage* Happened." It describes how a moment of intense personal crisis precipitates a groundbreaking discovery for photographic modernism:

> My mother was dying. Our estate was going to pieces. The old horse of 37 was being kept alive by the 70-year-old coachman. I, full of the feeling of today: all about me disintegration—slow but sure: dying chestnut trees —all the chestnuts in this country have been dying for years: the pines doomed too—disease: I, poor, but at work: the world in a great mess: the human being a queer animal—not as dignified as our giant chestnut tree on the hill.
>
> So I made up my mind […] I'd make a series of cloud pictures. […] Through clouds to put down my philosophy of life—to show that my

[40] Stieglitz, "How I Came to Photograph Clouds," reprinted in Richard Whelan, ed. *Stieglitz on Photography* (1923; New York: Aperture, 2000), 237.

> photographs were not due to subject matter—not to special trees, or faces, or interiors, to special privileges, clouds were there for everyone—no tax as yet on them—free.
>
> So I began to work with the clouds—and it was great excitement—daily for weeks. Every time I developed I was so wrought up, always believing I had nearly gotten what I was after—but had failed. A most tantalizing sequence of days and weeks. I knew exactly what I was after.[41]

The origin myths of *Equivalents* and *The Steerage* each present a distinct narrative conflict that Stieglitz claims to solve with modernist photography. Where he claims that *The Steerage* stemmed from a moment of estrangement from Americans who imitate Europeans, the *Equivalents* stemmed from a moment of disintegration of Stieglitz's familiar world—his mother, horse, servant, chestnut tree, and family estate. While the conflicts appear different on their surface, beneath each was the idea that materialism and industry threatened the nation, mandating a "return" to common American people and their unique relationship to the land. The way that Stieglitz brought together "the common people" with "the feeling of ship and ocean and sky and the feeling of release" in his narrative about *The Steerage* was mirrored in his *Equivalents* story by a similar toward the sky that consolidated ideas about common Americans and their birthright freedoms. Analysis of the *Equivalents* against the backdrop of Stieglitz's origin story reveals that Stieglitz regarded the modernist project as facilitating a conceptual rebirth of the white American race as unified with each other and with the landscape.

Stieglitz described his epiphany moment as emerging from a disintegrating landscape. The threat posed by the dissolution of the familiar world around him

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[41] Stieglitz, "How I Came to Photograph Clouds," 237.

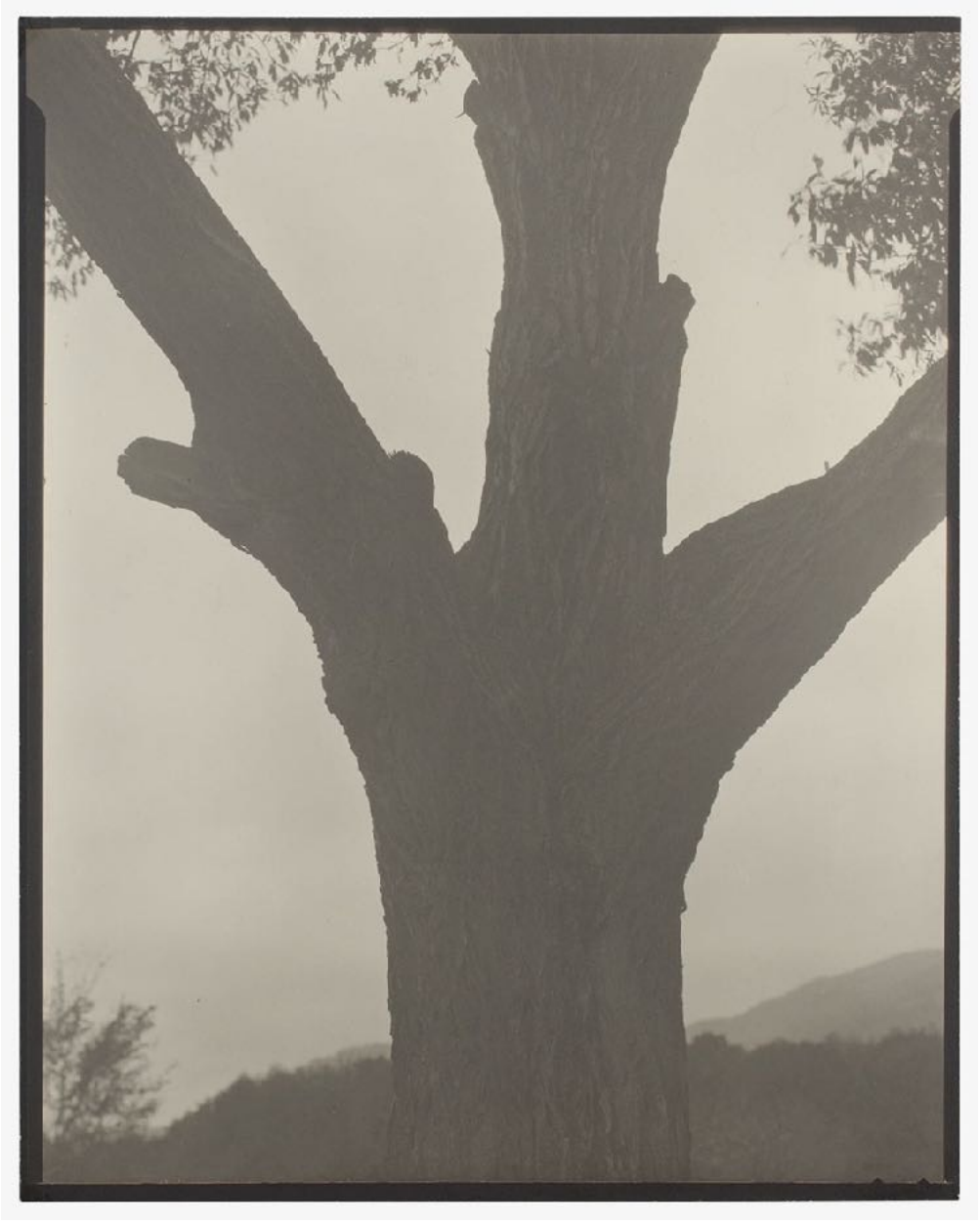

Figure 82. *The Dying Chestnut*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1919.

paralleled Americans' emerging recognition that there were limits to the nation's natural resources. At the turn of the century American naturalists observed and publicized their findings about the human-caused extinction of several species of flora and fauna, most notably the American bison and passenger pigeon.[42] In 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt announced that logging had depleted the nation's forests to the point that "the country is unquestionably on the verge of a timber famine which will be felt in every household in the land."[43] The nation's founding identity as the land of "milk and honey" was disturbed by the possibility of extinction. The first Europeans to visit North America had reported an inexhaustible wilderness teeming with flora and fauna. Integral to early settler identity had been the god-given mandate to transform the overabundant chaos of nature into a landscape that was orderly, productive, and aligned with virtue. The awareness that the nation's resources might be finite and threatened by the settlement's own activity therefore threatened the concept of the white American birthright to "tend" the landscape.[44]

This issues hit close to home for Stieglitz during the 1910s when blight developed on the American Chestnut tree at the Stieglitz estate at Lake George. The tree was infected with a blight that would render its species functionally extinct within four decades.[45] His account describes how the painful awareness of the spreading blight triggered a realization that the nation was steadily disintegrating all around him. He

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[42] See Mark V. Barrow, Jr., *Nature's Ghosts: Confronting Extinction from the Age of Jefferson to the Age of Ecology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 78-134.

[43] Theodore Roosevelt, *Presidential Addresses and State Papers*, vol. 7 (New York: The Review of Reviews Company, 1910), 1542.

[44] Barrow, *Nature's Ghosts*, 84-85; Cronon, *Changes in the Land.*

[45] Susan Freinkel, *American Chestnut: The Life, Death, and Rebirth of a Perfect Tree*, 3.

portrayed himself as an impoverished humble worker in the sublime of a deteriorating landscape of a nation whose best days were in the past and whose future was uncertain. His mother would die in 1922 and along with her a generation of immigrants who arrived in the country before (as Stieglitz believed) industrialization had tainted its rugged pioneering spirit. His coachman, a stand-in for the common American worker, was dying and along with him an American working class connected to the land, rather than tied to factory wage labor and modern capitalism. Stieglitz feared the loss of his family's estate at Lake George, New York—a sign of their place in the nation as land-owning settlers. For Stieglitz the large expiring chestnut tree on the Stieglitzes' estate exemplified this "disintegration" of the nation and its humble "primitive" people—"queer animal[s]"—taking place all around him.

As Stieglitz's narrative portrays, his *Equivalents* series appeared to emerge out of his emotional studies of the dying chestnut tree on his family's Lake George estate. In 1919 before Stieglitz began the series, he photographed the chestnut's trunk as the blight began to overtake it (figure 82), focusing on the deep pattern in its bark. Stieglitz preserved enough detail in the shadows of the print to enable an informed viewer to make out signs of blight in the tree's cracking bark. Photographed at eye-level, the chestnut is almost a human-like figure with a torso and symmetrical arms. Accentuating the feeling of the portrait is the near blankness of the sky in the background. This indistinct soft grey haze is characteristic of photographs made on cloudy or foggy days. The muted forms of a landscape recede into the lower distance of the photograph, grounding the tree on the land and—along with the hint of leaves on the upper edges of the print—serving to contain the tree's large stature within the frame. The somberness of the image seems to reflect Stieglitz's own grief and empathy for the tree.

The serenity of this early photograph would not however be characteristic of the images he included in the *Equivalents* series. By 1924 the tree had died and Stieglitz memorialized it in a set of five photographs, writing to friends about his loss and mourning. To Sherwood Anderson he described the tree as a "heroic figure" whose dead body on the hill was "sticking in [his] system."[46] To his friend Alfred Kremborg he described the tree again as a "heroic figure" and echoed the dismal sentiments he had written in his 1923 "How I Came to Photograph Clouds:" "Death alive everywhere. Marvellous [sic] trees dead—dying. A hero on the Hill dying for years—an old chestnut —now completely dead. Still a hero—."[47] True to his tragic narrative, in Stieglitz's 1924 photographs the dark and dying form of the humble "dignified" hero points upward to the sky (figure 83). Its tallest branches spread in a shape evocative of human veins and the life force that once ran through them. The broken and craggy lower branches testify to the violence and decay of death that will slowly deteriorate the rest of its lifeless form. The majestic reach of the chestnut tree is pictured in relief against the dramatic chiaroscuro of clouds that cut diagonally across the frame. The photographs mirror the narrative conflict in his "How I Came to Photograph Clouds" origin story: contemplation of the tree's fated end stimulates a resurrection of hope in modernist promise of the clouds, which show off their qualities of abstraction by dividing the frame in two, but are also, as Stieglitz described, "there for everyone"—a democratic art for the common people.

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[46] Stieglitz to Sherwood Anderson, 21 May 1924, YCAL, reprinted in Greenough, *The Key Set*, 610.

[47] Stieglitz to Alred Kremborg, 9 June 1924, YCAL, reprinted in Greenough, *The Key Set*, 610.

Figure 3. *Tree Set 3*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1924.

The Second Stieglitz Circle frequently invoked title of "hero" when referring to common Americans who housed within them the "primitive" spirit of the pioneer. As an unsigned essay, "The American," in *The Seven Arts* declared:

> "The hero of the folk is born humbly, in a manger, a hut, a cabin. […] In the hour of great tribulation, in the hour of the people's need, he rises and leads them. […] He leads them to victory, and in the moment of triumph, dies a shameful death. In his death, his people come to a greater life. His sacrifice becomes a means to their re-birth."[48]

By uplifting the stories of such humble heroes, the Second Stieglitz Circle proposed that modern art would inspire "the shock of a common awakening" of ordinary Americans to their greatness.[49]

The Lake George location of the dying chestnut and dramatic cloud photographs were particularly significant to such a purpose. Stieglitz and his contemporaries would have understood Lake George as significant in defining the "American character." The Stieglitz estate was located at the southern shore of the lake, near the famous site where the French army massacred the British in the Siege at Fort William Henry (1757) during the French and Indian War (1754-1763). As historian Ian K. Steele documents, the siege quickly became a usable past. Its details were exaggerated and changed as soon as the first newspaper accounts appeared. By the nineteenth century, James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 *The Last of the Mohicans*: *A Narrative of 1757,* which went against versions of the story presented by historians and eye witnesses, cemented the siege as a legendary moment of

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[48] "The American," 555-556.

[49] "The American," 555-556.

American history.[50] In Cooper's account, the "American race" was born in 1757, gaining its distinction from Indian "savages" on the one hand and "imbecile" British masters on the other hand. During the course of the novel's events settlers become conscious of their own self-possession and desire to for independence from the oppressive overseas power of the Crown. Settlers also learn that Indians cannot be trusted, and that even those who are good and just are fated to "disappear" from the land. Hawkeye, the protagonist woodsman who has been raised by Indians, embodies the idea of a "pure" frontier whiteness that the Second Stieglitz Circle celebrated. He lives an honest life free of the trappings of civilization. Because he has been transformed by the wilderness he is also entirely estranged from the British colonists—a "natural" American. Hawkeye exemplifies the capacity for self-governance and intimacy with the landscape that signals whites' destiny to found a permanent democratic settlement. Following the Siege at Lake George and a series of dramatic murders resulting in the death of the heir to the Mohican chiefship, Hawkeye's adopted Indian father hands the entire continent over to Hawkeye and his people.[51] The gift act birthed the "American race" as, not a biological race, but a chosen people bound together by an ethereal bond that materialized concurrently with

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[50] Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: For William Henry & the "Massacre"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 149-170; See also James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 146-150. According to Belich it was not until after 1800 with the popularization of Coopers' novels and other frontier mythologies that a unified settler identity began to emerge.

[51] James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, new ed. (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1951). Originally published in 1826.

"the inevitable fate" of Indians to "disappear, either from the regions in which their fathers dwelt, or altogether from the earth."[52]

Following Cooper's novel the siege became widely understood as the moment that the American nation was conceptually born, precipitating the sense of national unity that inspired the American Revolution. It thus became central to the usable past origin story of the United States.[53] Philip Deloria describes how usable pasts like Cooper's enjoyed renewed interest during the urbanization of the early twentieth century. The fiction of unity created a sense of American identity and purpose that assuaged the anxieties of crowded multiethnic cities and industrial capitalism.[54] In 1909 *The Last of the Mohicans* was adapted to a screenplay directed by D. W. Griffith (director of *Birth of a Nation*), and again in 1920, directed by Maurice Tourneur and Clarence Brown. During the 1920s the novel itself was also revived as a "classic."[55] As the site of the origin story of the American race, Lake George was therefore a fitting place for Second Stieglitz Circle artists to uplift common Americans by "grop[ing] backward for that central source of our existence, that unity of life from which we were sprung."[56]

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[52] Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, 4-5; Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014), 71, 102-104; The idea of Americans as a "Chosen People" comes from Francis Jennings outlining of American exceptionalism in which Americans believe their society to be unique in that it was created through the process of civilization's struggle on the American frontier and that their triumph signified that that that from the beginning they were a "Chosen People" or "super race" that was both unique and better than other cultures because of their difference as a race that formed in America rather than through biology. Francis Jennings, *Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 327-328, cited in Dunbar Ortiz, *An Indigenous People's History,* 104.

[53] Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History*, 71, 102-104;

[54] Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 98-99.

[55] Martin Barker and Roger Sabin, *The Lasting of the Mohicans: History of an American Myth* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), 43-50.

[56] "The American," 555-556.

The turn from dying chestnut tree to ethereal sky mirrored the final crescendo scene of the 1920 silent film *The Last of the Mohicans* in which, following the terror of the siege and Cora's death, the nation is peacefully transferred from the Indians to the Americans. The transfer is consolidated with a meditative shot of clouds of smoke from a funeral pyre through which a dove, released by the "last Mohican," flies free. The striking effect of light and clouds had been created by the director Brown's pioneering use of smoke and lighting to create new cinematic special effects.[57] The view toward the sky signified the special fate of the American race as a chosen people destined to occupy the continent from coast to coast. Stieglitz's portrayal of the chestnut as a heroic "giant" more "dignified" than humans alluded to such mythological American imagery. The legendary eighteenth century moment in which the Indian supposedly faced his fate with dignity on the shores of Lake George informed Stieglitz's perception of the expiring chestnut species in his own twentieth century moment. However, in Stieglitz's case he saw the chestnut as the folk hero, symbol of the noble qualities of the American race. By offering a similar crescendo view to the heavens he hoped to remind his fellow Americans of the usable past history and fate they shared as a chosen people.

The extinction of the American chestnut tree was also understood by Stieglitz's contemporaries in racialized terms that indigenized white settlers to the American landscape in distinction from exogenous "aliens." The American chestnut blight's origination had been discovered in China.[58] One contemporary headline declared, "Tree Enemies Infest America."[59] Accordingly, it was easier for contemporary Americans to

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[57] Barker and Sabin, *The Lasting of the Mohicans*, 67.

[58] Freinkel, *American Chestnut*, 66-68.

[59] "Tree Enemies Infest America, Says Grower," *The Washington Herald*, September 9, 1916, 2.

mourn the chestnuts and decry the injustice of their death without also challenging their own beliefs about the rightfulness of Americans' relationship to the landscape. Looking to China satisfied Americans' desire that "somebody should be held to blame."[60] The chestnut blight was therefore portrayed as a "miserable stowaway," who had illegally immigrated to the country, ignoring the fact that American industry had imported the blight by importing Japanese chestnut trees to meet white Americans' demands. Though Indigenous people treasured the American chestnut for nourishment and medicine, they were largely overlooked as a food source by colonists. The native American chestnut tree had small nuts that were more difficult to extract than those Europeans were accustomed to in the Old World. Japanese trees were therefore imported for their fit with Americans' desire to extract the maximum value from all natural resources.[61]

The fact that the Chinese blight was portrayed as a duplicitous illegal immigrant fit well into immigration debates of the day that expressed white Americans' fears for the well-being of the republic. Stieglitz photographed his dead tree during the same year as the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, or the Johnson-Reed Act, which included the Asian Exclusion Act. The Johnson-Reed Act set quotas for immigrant populations from European countries based upon the populations existent in the United States during the 1890 Census, and also barred all immigration from China, Japan, and the Philippines. The framing of the chestnut blight as an "enemy" and "stowaway" dovetailed with American sentiments about Asian Americans and Asian immigrants. These sentiments led to specific language in the Act that designated Asians as "non-immigrants" and fined companies that illegally brought immigrants to U.S. shores (also requiring that

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[60] D.C. Peattie, "Summertime," *The Evening Star* [Washington, D.C.], July 9, 1928, 27.

[61] Freinkel, *American Chestnut*, 68, 16-17; William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England,* rev. ed. (1983; New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 45-46.

all "alien seamen" on ocean vessels be subjected to a medical examination at the port of arrival).[62]

According to historian Mae Ngai the Immigration Act of 1924 effectively constructed a category of racial unassimilability for Asians by deeming them ineligible for citizenship. The Immigration Act was however only one of many legal cases and regulations passed in the early 1920s that reflected white Americans' attitudes toward Asian immigrants as unassimilable. Many cases revolved around land ownership.[63] Alarm about the Chestnut blight closely related to the settler colonial ideals expressed in several "alien land laws" passed in 1923 that made it illegal for Asians to own agricultural land or real estate based on their ineligibility for citizenship in nine states. The perceived need for such legislation was sparked by Japanese immigrants' attempts to assimilate into American settler culture by adopting yeoman lifestyles.[64] The legal decisions reflected the settler colonial thirst for land concealed within the racial belief that white Americans enjoyed a unique spiritual relationship with the land. By extension to allow those unassimilable into the "American race" to cultivate the land would transgress the founding principles of the nation.

Alarm regarding Asian land ownership paralleled Stieglitz's own sentiments that the dying chestnut was a sign of the "world in a great mess," as if the ordering principles of nation had unraveled. "All about me disintegration," he lamented. "Slow but sure."[65]

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[62] Immigration Act of 1924, H.R. 7995, 68th Cong. sec. 20a (1924); Immigration Act of 1924, H.R. 7995, 68th Cong. sec. 5 (1924).

[63] Mai Ngai, "The Architecture of Race," *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 1 (June 1999): 86-87.

[64] Mai Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 38-39, 46-49; Ngai, "The Architecture of Race," 86-87.

[65] Stieglitz, "How I Came to Photograph Clouds," 237.

In the United States, at the core of the settler world order is contained in the decrees governing the occupation of land. By extension trees had come to signify Americans' special relationship to the land by symbolizing the particular classes of white Americans that benefited from their shade and timber. For instance, American Elm was associated with the affluent whites of New England towns and cities where elms commonly lined the streets. Meanwhile, as historian Thomas J. Campanella details, the chestnut tree was distinctly rural. It was likened to the rural poor of agricultural areas and the Appalachians —the quintessential folk people of the nation.[66] Such folk people were commonly portrayed by the Second Stieglitz Circle as the heroes and protagonists of American history. For Stieglitz the threat of blight to the chestnut tree was the threat of the unassimilable Other to the common people of the nation along with their legended spiritual relationship to the land.

The period surrounding the Immigration Act of 1924 was also racially marked by the renewal of frameworks of whiteness active during the American Revolution. Though the period is often remembered for the prominent role eugenics rhetoric played in public life, the Johnson-Reed act counterintuitively ushered in a more inclusive version of whiteness. Despite the fact that eugenicists famously championed the Johnson-Reed Act, Matthew Frye Jacobson demonstrates that it was not eugenics logic alone that triumphed in the Act. Jacobson argues that the fact that eugenicists drew upon the idea of race as linked to "fitness for self-government" encouraged law makers to associate the Act with the logic for citizenship outlined in the Naturalization Act of 1790. Eugenicists ideas were therefore a palatable basis for twentieth-century citizenship legislation even for law

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66 Freinkel, *American Chestnut*, 3; Thomas Campanella, *Republic of Shade: New England and the American Elm* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 4-10, 20-24, 108-117.

makers suspicious of the racial "science" of eugenics itself. Ngai adds that, even though racial values of the early decades of the twentieth century were colored by eugenic "science," the government and courts consistently disposed of science when it failed to support the racial prejudices of those in power. The Johnson-Reed Act therefore did not create new eugenic racial hierarchies but instead formalized historic ones that already existed in American political culture. Its restrictions were based upon the teleological idea that the American nation had a natural "character" that could be reinforced or destroyed by the types of people allowed into its borders.[67] It therefore formalized racial principles of inclusion and exclusion that had defined the American body politic since the Revolutionary era, while also sanctioning various European immigrant groups as no longer a threatening to national identity. The Johnson-Reed act therefore had the effect of creating a legal conception for monolithic American whiteness in which racial difference *between* whites became inconsequential.[68]

By both restricting immigration and legislating a definition of whiteness, the Johnson-Reed Act had the effect of diminishing the imagined threat that "inferior" white immigrants posed to the racial make up of the American race. Passage of the law

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[67] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, 86-95; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 30, 46.

[68] Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 95. Whiteness also gained legal definition in 1924 in an anti-miscegenation law in Virginia. The "one-drop" law defined whites against nonwhites by specifying that one drop of black "blood" jettisoned a person from the classification of "white." However the law also contained the "Pocahontas exception" that allowed whites to be up to one-sixteenth Indigenous American, accommodating many whites' fanciful notion that they were descendants of John Rolfe and Pocahontas. The law stated, "It shall hereafter be unlawful for any white person in this State to marry any save a white person, or a person with no other admixture of blood than white and American Indian. For the purpose of this act, the term 'white person' shall apply only to the person who has no trace whatsoever of any blood other than Caucasian; but persons who have one-sixteenth or less of the blood of the American Indian and have no other non-Caucasic blood shall be deemed to be white persons." 1924 Va. Acts, ch. 371, sec. 5 (1924); Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016), 76-78.

dampened the volume of public discourse that had kept alive the eugenic perception of distinction between "Caucasian" races. The Act thus had the effect of finally absorbing various European immigrant groups into a popular conception of a monolithic American whiteness. Jacobson recounts how in the years following the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act, white Americans began to perceive themselves as belonging to a monolithic white race bound together both by the privileges they enjoyed in the United States and also by common stories of the oppressions their ancestors suffered in the Old World.[69] This shifting racial logic follows closely the settler colonial ideology outlined by Veracini. Veracini describes how settlers perceive themselves to be racially united by an ethereal bond to the freedoms of the settlement rather than biological bonds. The affirmation of these bonds is frequently reiterated by enumerating the common oppressions experienced before coming to the colony.[70] Assimilating newer European immigrants into white American identity had the effect of connecting their more recent experiences of poverty and oppression to earlier motivations for settler emigration from Europe, while also renewing faith in the redemptive freedoms of the nation enjoyed by its virtuous white citizens.

What had been considered to be separate "races" and "nations" and "peoples" during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, became united in a monolithic American whiteness by their distinction from the "colored races" deemed unassimilable and ineligible for citizenship. As public intellectual Lothrop Stoddard argued in 1927, with the success of the Johnson-Reed Act, "the gates had been closed against future immigration perils," and it was time to "stop theorizing about superiors and inferiors"

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[69] Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 86-95.

[70] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 14, 77.

and focus on "the great task of perfecting *our* America."[71] Stoddard specified that "*our* America" was the nation that was born when "white colonists… endowed the virgin land with a true civilization, and… ultimately breathed into it a distinctive national soul." The rhetoric that joined European immigrants to the nation therefore stoked a renewed energetic discourse for connecting Colonial and Revolutionary era histories to white Americans' efforts to build a common utopian national future.

Though Stieglitz's *Equivalents* series may have appeared to be a grouping of abstract photographs appreciating the democratic art of the skies, they were in fact infused with the kindling of white settler rhetoric within American modernism. Stieglitz's turn from the darkness of his hero's demise toward the uplift offered by the skies over Lake George—the birthplace of the American race—paralleled the racial logics emerging during the 1920s and the hopes that modern art would spark a renaissance in "*our* America."

## The Sky: A Spiritual Frontier Dispossessed from Indigenous Culture

Despite the fact that no racialized bodies appeared in Stieglitz's *Equivalents*, the images expressed a racialized perspective on the natural world that joined a longer tradition of naturalizing white perceptions of the American landscape. Albert Bierstadt had frequently used sublime renderings of clouds in order to convey the idea that God had ordained the westward movement of white Christian settlers across the nation. As the quintessential Manifest Destiny painter, Bierstadt used dramatic visual techniques in

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[71] Lothrop Stoddard, *Re-Forging America* (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), 93-103.

Figure 84. *Among the Sierra Nevada,* by Albert Bierstadt, 1868.

his landscape paintings, combining beautiful and sublime aesthetics, to promote the idea that God had ordained the American people to expand their settlement westward to the Pacific coast. As discussed in the chapter above, his paintings promoted the idea that the American natural world was the unique heritage of Americans on par with European monuments and that sightseeing was a civilized cultural activity, equivalent to visiting an art museum.[72] While natural formations such as mountains and waterways were fabricated to evoke a sense of timeless harmony between people and nature, the skies and clouds were reserved to conjure an ethereal presence (1868, figure 84).[73] The dramatic chiaroscuro of clouds and the saturated colors of sunsets and sunrises communicated the idea that the American scenery was animated by a Christian God. Landscape imagery like Bierstadt's infused the visual attributes of the American landscape with the belief that Americans were a chosen people by giving substance to the Manifest Destiny belief that white Americans were uniquely able to appreciate and preserve the beauty of the continent.[74]

Though westward expansion and nation-building were projects of a prior era, the notion of gazing upon the American scenery as an act of nationalism and preservation were certainly instilled in Stieglitz during childhood summer vacations at Niagara Falls, the Catskills, and Lake George—all significant sites of settler cultural heritage.[75] His

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[72] John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 127, 130, 141-142.

[73] Tricia Laughlin Bloom, "Close to the Soil: The Newark Museum's Landscape Painting and Natural Science Collections," in *The Rockies and the Alps: Bierstadt, Calame, and the Romance of the Mountains*, ed. Katherine Manthorne and Tricia Laughlin Bloom (London: Giles, 2018), 41; Katherine Manthorne, "Painting the Rockies, Invoking the Alps: American Artists and Their Romance with Mountains," in *The Rockies and the Alps*, 102-105.

[74] Sears, *Sacred Places*, 134-148.

[75] Correspondence between Hedwig Stieglitz and Edward Stieglitz, summer 1872, box 241, folder 4234, YCAL.

Figure 85. *Songs of the Sky,* by Alfred Stieglitz, 1924.

Figure 86. *Equivalent,* by Alfred Stieglitz, 1923.

father had even chosen their vacation spots according to his desire to tour each site depicted by the Hudson River School.[76] His modernist revival of visions of the natural world was a "grope backward for that central source of [American] existence"—an evocation of Americans' unique spiritual connection to the landscape signified by dramatic skies.

If Bierstadt had drawn upon visual conventions for depicting skies to convince his audience of God's presence in the landscape, Stieglitz's use of the manipulable elements of the photographic medium achieved a similar effect—but as "facts" that seemed uncontrived. He continually emphasized that the *Equivalents* were "straight" photographs that employed no "tricks" to achieve their visual effects, claiming that their meaning "comes through directly, without any extraneous or distracting pictorial or representational factors."[77] Even though he did not employ alterations typical of pictorialism in its early years, such as soft focus or staging, he did employ manipulations that were perhaps permissible within his working definition of the "straight" photograph.[78] Stieglitz strategically manipulated the exposure and print to construct the landscape as modern art. In order to make dramatic photographs of clouds Stieglitz had to severely underexpose his plates. *Equivalents* in which Stieglitz included trees and elements of the horizon make evident how drastically underexposed his plates (figures 85-86, 1923-1924). By reducing the exposure time to render discernible differences between the bright sky and the various clouds within it, he caused the horizon to become completely silhouetted with no discernible detail. Because film cannot record as wide of a

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[76] Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz*, 37.

[77] Whelan quoting Stieglitz in *Stieglitz on Photography,* 238.

[78] For further discussion of the meaning and evolution of the term "straight photography" see chapter one above.

spectrum of light and shadow as the human eye perceives, landscape photographers frequently must decide what details discernible to the eye must be sacrificed on film. There is much more light in a daytime sky (even on a cloudy day) than there is in the landscape below it. While the human eye can see both clouds in the sky and the hills below clearly, film cannot easily record both. Exposure calculations for landscape photography typically aim to render the land optically "accurate" so one can discern shades of difference between a tree, a lake, and a grassy knoll. However, this choice causes the sky to become so overexposed that clouds are not visible in the resulting image. For instance, Stieglitz's 1919 rendering of the dying chestnut tree shows detail in the trunk of the tree, causing the sky to lose any detail that may have been discernible to the eye at the moment of exposure. Depending on the time of day and weather at the time of exposure, the light value of the sky in the 1919 photograph and that of the upper left corner of the 1924 chestnut photograph might have been nearly identical in terms of measurable lumens. However in the prints, the sky is the brightest highlight in the 1919 photograph, while it is considerably darker in the 1924 image—forming a mid-tone rather than a highlight. An "accurate" depiction of the sky in either picture would lay somewhere between the two images, making the sky a very light grey, but would sacrifice some detail at either the highlight (sky) or shadow (tree) end of the image. The 1919 image would become darker, sacrificing the blight details of the chestnut's trunk, while the 1919 image would show more detail in the surface of the branches but jettison the dramatic texture of the clouds. Stieglitz's exposure decisions reflected not only his technical prowess, but the emotions and meanings he intended to convey.

Stieglitz's *Equivalents* also demonstrate that he frequently chose to render details that were not actually visible to the human eye. For example, in the lower right corner of

Figure 87. *Equivalent,* by Alfred Stieglitz, 1925.

Figure 88. *Equivalent*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1925.

Figure 89. *Equivalent*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1930.

*Songs of the Sky* (figure 85) the clouds have nearly the same shadow density as the distant hills at the bottom right of the image, such that the line between them can only barely be discerned. Considering the sunlight streaming from behind the clouds, it is not reasonable to infer that the clouds were as dark as the land to a human eye viewing the scene. While the dark cumulonimbus clouds that occupy the expanse of the mid ground of the photograph were certainly *visible* they were unlikely as dark as they appear in the photograph, nor was the landscape so dark that no texture could be discerned by the eye. By underexposing his negative to give density to the clouds, Stieglitz intentionally created the dramatic highlights at the upper edge of the cumulonimbus clouds that would have otherwise been indiscernible from the sky behind them. This choice also made visible the high wispy cirrostratus clouds that were likely entirely invisible to the human eye. Similar analyses can be made of each of Stieglitz's *Equivalents,* demonstrating that his cloud subjects would have appeared differently or not at all to Stieglitz's own eyes at the time of exposure. For example *Equivalent* (1925, figure 87), *Equivalent* (1925, figure 88), and *Equivalent* (1930, figure 89), if rendered accurately so that the blue of the sky was a light grey would show little or no detail in the clouds. This is not because the clouds themselves were not at all visible, but their forms were certainly much less contrasty and dramatic than Stieglitz's "straight" photographs portrayed them. Stieglitz himself suggested the need for manipulation in "How I Came to Photograph Clouds," when he said, "Every time I developed I was so wrought up, always believing I had nearly gotten what I was after—but had failed." The fact that he "knew exactly what [he] was after" and yet continually failed to capture it on film evidenced that some amount of extraordinary tampering was necessary to make the clouds before his eyes match the

vision in his mind.[79] Certainly with his highly technical training and decades of experience, Stieglitz would not have failed to record visual facts as they appeared before the camera.[80] In other words, like Bierstadt, Stieglitz did in fact fabricate clouds out of thin air in order to signify an ethereal Godly notion of the American sky.

Stieglitz also followed in the footsteps of many American artists that had been drawn to Lake George specifically because its beautiful scenery was endowed with the American histories that had unfolded there. As the site of several military campaigns during the French and Indian Wars and the American Revolution, the lake had a unique place in American history. As Thomas Cole wrote in 1836 in his "Essay on American Scenery," Lake George uniquely offered its visitors the opportunity to obtain a direct experience of American history by becoming enveloped in its sensory pleasures:

> I would rather persuade you to visit the "Holy Lake," the beautiful Horizon, than describe its scenery — to behold you rambling on its storied shores, where its southern expanse is spread, begemmed with isles of emerald, and curtained by green receding hills — or to see you gliding over its bosom where the steep and rugged mountains approach from either side, shadowing with black precipices the innumerable islets, some of which bearing a solitary tree, others a group of two or three, or a 'goodly company,' seem to have been sprinkled over the smiling deep in nature's frolic hour. These sceneries are classic. History and genius have hallowed them. War's shrill clarion once waked the echoes from these

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[79] Stieglitz, "How I Came to Photograph Clouds," 237.

[80] For discussion of Stieglitz's technical training, see chapter one, n150.

Figure 90. *Landscape Scene from the Last of the Mohicans (The Death of Cora)*, by Thomas Cole, 1826.

> now silent hills, and the pen of a living master pourtrayed [sic] them in the pages of romance.[81]

Cole attests to the fact that Americans saw the natural features of Lake George as beautiful because they were infused with historical narratives about the birth of the nation told by Cooper in "the pages of romance." During the mid-nineteenth century, Americans' desire for historical narratives drew them to Lake George. The lake was popularly portrayed in fiction, nonfiction, and travel literature, drawing tourists to its shores and creating a demand for artistic renderings.[82] Like Cole nearly every artist of the Hudson River School painted at Lake George. Cole chose to depict one of the final scenes of Cooper's novel in *Landscape Scene from the Last of the Mohicans (The Death of Cora)* (1826, figure 90). Similar to the crescendo scene in the 1920 silent film, Cole uses sublime clouds for dramatic effect. While ominous dark clouds loom over the ill-fated scene in the foreground, rays of light break through the clouds to shine upon Lake George and the untouched gently sloping wilderness that surrounds it in the background. The clouds therefore guide the meaning of the image as the moment in which the nation is born out of a conflict that unifies its people, who are ordained by God to inherit the landscape. Cole's depiction of Lake George was thus of a cloth with Bierstadt's landscapes and those by other artists of the Hudson River School who inspired Americans to appreciate the continent's scenery as a uniquely American art bestowed upon them by God.

Like the Second Stieglitz Circle who would follow them, these artists had also been concerned about the threat of industry. Cole's five-painting series *The Course of*

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[81] Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," quoted in Gwendolyn Owens, "Classic Lake George," 13.

[82] Gwendolyn Owns, "Classic Lake George", 14.

Figure 91. *The Course of Empire: The Savage State*, by Thomas Cole, 1836.

Figure 92. *The Course of Empire: The Pastoral State*, by Thomas Cole, 1836.

Figure 93. *The Course of Empire: Destruction,* by Thomas Cole, 1836.

Figure 94. *The Course of Empire: Desolation,* by Thomas Cole, 1836.

*Empire* constructed a chronological view of a fictional American lake similar to Lake George as the setting for a warning about the dangers of industry and materialism. The five paintings begin with *The Savage State* (1836, figure 91) a scene of the lake prior to white civilization. *The Death of Cora* and *The Savage State* share similar shapes and compositions as well as the rendering of wild craggy trees and mountains, looming clouds, and blending of primordial lake mists with primitive campfire smoke. The second painting in Cole's series presents American scenery in its pastoral state of idealized harmony between nature and civilization (1834, figure 92). The following scenes (1836, figures 93-94) warn of the certain destruction that will come to a society that is over concerned with materialism and industry.

As Americans began to fear the consequences of industrialization during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Lake George continued to accumulate meaning, becoming not only the birthplace of the nation, but also a place that maintained the ideal pastoral state of American civilization's relationship to the natural landscape. Several natural and historical factors contributed to the fact that Lake George maintained many of its pastoral qualities long after many surrounding New York lakes had been polluted and decimated by unregulated extraction industries. Whereas landscapes in the mid and late nineteenth century typically depicted tree stumps to signify industry's impact upon the landscape, depictions of Lake George did not feature stumps despite the fact that even by 1810 there were twenty-five sawmills on the lake.[83]

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[83] The tree stump in nineteenth-century paintings likely embodied the paradoxical feelings that Americans had about the destruction of the North American landscape. It at once signified progress and the improvement of the land by settlers and also feelings of regret, loss, and guilt. It is likely that tree stumps signified the inevitability of change and loss that accompanied the building of American civilization. See Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., "'Ravages of the Axe': The Meaning of the Tree Stump in Nineteenth-Century American Art," *The Art Bulletin* 61, no. 4 (December 1979), 611-626; Barbara Novak, "The Double-Edged Axe," *Art in America* 64 (January-February 1964), 44-50; Barrow, *Nature's Ghosts*, 84; Owens, "Classic Lake George," 15-16.

Lake George's sawmills were all small water-powered mills tucked beside streams in the woods. They gradually, rather than suddenly, decimated forests surrounding the lakes. Because decimated forests became farm and pasture land, the logging was seen in a positive light and contributed to the pastoral atmosphere around the lake. Because the mills were water powered they also did not pollute the lake like more modern mills at lakes nearby. Furthermore, when the timber industry had decimated the lake's forests, the mills were abandoned and may have actually contributed to picturesque tastes for irregularity and decay as they became overgrown with nature. Furthermore, the fact that Lake George was not a waterway that connected to New York City and that it had many rocky islets in its channels to nearby lakes meant that it was not possible to develop the lake as a thoroughfare for industry. As a result, by the time the Stieglitzes bought their summer home in the 1870s and still so later when Stieglitz made his photographs of clouds, the lake came to signify an ideal balance between nature and civilization—enhanced by its historical legacy.[84] As *Picturesque America* described it, Lake George's overgrown ruins were picturesque "charms" rendered all the more pleasurable because of their associations with "historical reminisces."[85] Lake George thus seemed to hold intact a dream of the nation—a place where the nation's origins were not threatened by modern-day problems, and where the natural world still testified to the righteousness of the settlement.

Stieglitz's statement that his dying chestnut tree was at once entangled in a world disintegrating all around him and also the site of his redemptive vision, thus conjured additional layers of meaning. It was not merely one dying chestnut, nor even just the

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[84] Owens, "Classic Lake George," 14-16.

[85] William Cullen Bryant, ed., *Picturesque America*, Volume 2 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), 264.

threat of extinction of its species, but it appeared to foreshadow the end of the pastoral state of the lake, and along with it the doomed fate of the settler nation born on its shores. As the site of the birth of the nation, the lake was also an ideal site for the rebirth of the nation, a place that could inspire Americans to withdraw from materialism and instead appreciate as art the landscape that had been bestowed upon their race. By photographing the chestnut and the clouds above Lake George, Stieglitz followed in the footsteps of many artists that had depicted the lake, modernizing his view with the settler outlook of his era and the aesthetics of abstraction.

With his photographs of clouds, Stieglitz hoped to join his milieu in encouraging Americans through the mandate that each individual artist should, "Give voice to your own soul, and you will find that you have given birth to the soul of your people."[86] Stieglitz's initial epiphanies that he described when photographing clouds were described in exactly such terms. He described the images as photographs of "all his sensation of life" and his "philosophy of life."[87] In Rolland's own description of the way that American artists might uplift the people of their exceptional nation, he described artists as having the role of making American people into a symphony: "You must harmonize all of the dreams and liberties and thoughts brought to your shores by all your peoples. You must make of your culture a symphony that shall in a true way express your brotherhood of individuals, of races, of cultures banded together."[88] Stieglitz also described his photographs of clouds as songs and as symphonies. In his initial recounting of how he came to photograph clouds, Stieglitz stated that he hoped to make the visual equivalent

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[86] Rolland, "America and the Arts," 48-49.

[87] Seligman, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 53; Stieglitz, "How I Came to Photograph Clouds," 237.

[88] Rolland, "America and the Arts," 50.

of a symphony. He entitled his initial 1922 series of clouds *Music: A Sequence of Ten Cloud Photographs* and his following 1923 series as *Songs of the Sky*, not settling on the name *Equivalents* by which the entire group became known until the late 1920s. This was however not just a musical symphony, it was a symphony that described the particular make up of the American people as a people not bound together by biology, but by something more ethereal that could not only be represented by clouds, but particularly by the clouds floating over the site of the origins of the American people. Just as each painter had imbued Lake George with settler narrative appropriate to their time, encouraging audiences to see the natural landscape of the United States as art that spoke to the special qualities of the American people, Stieglitz looked to the American landscape to find a distinctly *modern* American art that would similarly encourage Americans to see their exceptionalism reflected to them in the natural world.

Stieglitz and other artists of Lake George however overwrote the significance that the lake had had for the Indians that had been displaced from their traditional homelands following the American Revolution. Lake George was called Andiatarocte by the the Mohawk people of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (commonly known as the Iroquois), a union of nations bound together by peace treaties and consensus decision-making since the fourteenth century. The lake lies upon a corridor of waterways between what is now Montreal in Canada and New York State in the United States. The land around the lake was likely originally valuable to Indigenous people for the rich moist soil that made it ideal for planting, growing, and harvesting food crops in the summers. After the Dutch established a trading post at nearby Fort Orange in 1624, the lake's proximity

to the trading post made it an economically valuable part of the Haudenosaunee territory.[89]

The Haudenosaunee, whose name means "People of the Longhouse," used the architecture of the longhouse as a metaphor to describe the geographical layout of their territory as well as ideology that governed it.[90] The longhouse was a multi-family architectural structure, typically about one hundred feet long and fifty feet wide. Within the longhouse was a central corridor and separate apartments for each family. The structure was warmed by fires along the central corridor and opened to the outside only at its easternmost and westernmost ends.[91] By conceptualizing their nation as a longhouse, the Haudenosaunee understood themselves as housing many families or nations together under one roof. The longhouse metaphor conceptualized that each nation had its own territorial space and accompanying responsibilities within the nation. The Mohawk were the keepers of the Eastern door of the longhouse with Lake George situated at the easternmost end of the overall Haudenosaunee territory. The Haudenosaunee also regarded the sky as the Confederacy's roof, holding the nations

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89 The Mohawks may not have lived at Lake George beginning until 1624-1628, when they forced the Mohican tribes living there east of the Hudson River in order to have better access to the Dutch trading port at Fort Orange. Daniel K Richter, "Ordeals of the Longhouse: The Five Nations in Early American History," in *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800*, Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell, eds. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 19-20.

90 Robert W. Venables, Introduction to U.S. Census Office, *The Six Nations of New York: The 1892 United States Extra Census Bulletin*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), vii-xi. Originally published in 1892.

91 Joseph Fraçois Lafitau, *Moeurs des Sauvages Ameriquains,* translated by M. M. Lebrun and printed in Lewis Henry Morgan, *League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee of Iroquois* (New York: M.H. Newman & Co., 1851), 314-317.

together in unity and peace. Under that roof however, each nation occupied its own area with sovereignty, maintaining its distinct culture and practices.[92]

The unity of the Haudenosaunee therefore was not conceptualized as a racial or cultural unity like that of white Americans, but instead as a practical and neighborly unity that provided for the self-determination of each nation within it. The Confederacy was legislated by the Kaienerokowa (Great Law of Peace) that originated under the direction of Haudenosaunee spiritual leaders Deganawidah (Peacemaker) and Hiawatha in the thirteenth century.[93] The unity of the Confederacy was designed to safekeep the nations that resided within it. Membership in the nation was not dictated by biological or spiritual mandate, but was voluntary and required ongoing maintenance through the renewal of consensus of each nation to agree to live peacefully together within it.[94] Under the Great Law of Peace, Haudenosaunee practiced a representative democracy that stressed the importance of public opinion, implemented governmental checks and balances, ensured the equality of all citizens, and pledged equitable sharing of natural resources.[95] The Mohawk civilians of Lake George thus demonstrated a capacity for self-

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[92] Oren Lyons, "The American Indian in the Past," in *Exiled in the Land of the Free: Democracy, Indian Nations, and the United States Constitution*, ed. Oren Lyons and John Mohawk (Santa Fe: Clear Light, 1992), 37-38; Donald A. Grinde, Jr. "Iroquois Political Theory and the Roots of American Democracy," in *Exiled in the Land of the Free*, 235-238.

[93] Lyons, "The American Indian in the Past," 37-38; Grinde, Jr. "Iroquois Political Theory," 235-238; In another "almost the same, but not quite" twist of Indigenous history, the iconic of Hiawatha made popular in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855) was not based on the Haudenosaunee founder. Trachtenberg identifies Longfellow's character as a transfigured version of an Ojibwe legendary hero "Manabozho." Trachtenberg, *Shades of Hiawatha*, 52; Nanabozho is a the Original Man of Anishinaabe Original Instructions stories. See Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2015), 205-215.

[94] Venables, Introduction to U.S. Census Office, vii-xi.

[95] Grinde, Jr. "Iroquois Political Theory," 237-240.

governance that united them together with the people of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and ensured their ongoing privileges to use the land's resources.

Historians have traced the significant influence of Haudenosaunee political philosophy upon the development of liberalism in Enlightenment thought and the formation of American democracy, beginning with Locke and Rousseau and continuing with Benjamin Franklin and the Continental Congress. Donald A. Grinde Jr. notes that during the eighteenth century, as Haudenosaunee and settler life became more entwined, Haudenosaunee began more concentrated efforts to educate settlers on the principles and practicalities of democratic self-governance.[96] The Haudenosaunee regarded themselves as the "elder Brethren" of the British. In their view, the British, having only recently arrived, could either chose to join the longstanding Confederacy and abide by its rules for peaceful coexistence or could chose to remain as merely visitors to Turtle Island (North America).[97] Under the the Great Law of Peace the Haudenosaunee had dictated similar treaties with other nations with whom they shared land while respecting each others' sovereignty.[98] The British, reliant upon the Haudenosaunee for protection, economic vitality, and sustenance appeared poised to safeguard their relationship with the Haudenosaunee by respecting their land ownership and governmental independence.[99] The Albany Plan of the Union (1754) was modeled after the Haudenosaunee

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[96] Grinde, Jr. 230-255.

[97] Venables, Introduction to U.S. Census Office, xi-xiv; Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003)167.

[98] For example the treaty between the Haudenosaunee and the Nishnaabeg is discussed in Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2011), 112-117.

[99] Venables, Introduction to U.S. Census Office, xi-xiv.

Constitution and meetings between Haudenosaunee and settler leaders were an ongoing occurrence up to eve the Declaration of Independence.[100]

Despite the conception that a capacity for self-governance was a definitive quality of American whiteness—as the basis of citizenship and national identity—it appears that such a capacity more rightfully belonged to the Haudenosaunee. As Benjamin Franklin observed:

> It would be a very strange Thing, if six Nations of ignorant Savages should be capable of forming a Scheme for such an Union, and be able to execute it in such a Manner, as that it has subsisted Ages, and appears indissoluble; and yet that a like Union should be impracticable for ten or a Dozen *English* Colonies, to whom it is more necessary, and must be more advantageous; and who cannot be supposed to want an equal Understanding of their Interests.[101]

Alongside his racist incredulity, Franklin displays an awareness of democracy as a practiced Haudenosaunee historical tradition, as well as of the Haudenosaunee's more skillful execution of it. If "fitness for self-governance" would come to be so firmly associated with white American identity that it would be the basis for citizenship invoked on the heels of the Revolution in the Naturalization Act of 1790 and again in the Immigration Act of 1924, the founding of the nation was not only synonymous with amnesia regarding genocide and dispossession, but also contained an amnesiac disavowal of Indigenous legacy at the very core of the legal and popular definition of whiteness.

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[100] Grinde, Jr. "Iroquois Political Theory," 230-255.

[101] Benjamin Franklin to James Parker, March 20, 1750/51, in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, volume 4 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959-87), 118-119.

Historians describe the Revolutionary era as one marked not only by settlers forging self-identity distinct from the British, but also a period in which settlers ceased to consider sharing land with Indigenous nations as a worthwhile effort.[102] In their adoption of principles of self-governance settlers ceased to heed at least two of its major principles—the equal rights of all civilians and the equitable sharing of land. The Second Continental Congress' Declaration of July 1776 famously stated, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Though such sentiments clearly displayed lessons learned from the Haudenosaunee, they were mobilized to different ends. Also contained within the document were other keys to the unity between the "equal" men of the nation and their "unalienable rights." The document named Indians and the British monarchy together as enemies of the state, accusing them of conspiring to withhold land from settlers.[103] The self-possession of white settlers was thus forged against "savage" Others within the settlement and the Crown overseas who were regarded as inhibiting the appropriation of land.

The "capacity for self-governance" outlined in the founding documents and sentiments of the early Republic signified a "capacity for reflection, restraint, and self-

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[102] Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 191; Venables, Introduction to U.S. Census, xi-xiv.

[103] The document stated twenty-seven grievances against King George, including, "He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands," and, "He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions." Congress of the Confederation, "Engrossed Declaration of Independence," National Archives, Washington, D.C., Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, digitized online; Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 216-217; See also Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence*, (New York: Vintage, 1998), 154-170.

sacrifice." These qualities were regarded as definitive of a capacity for self-governance because they signified that a democracy demanded more of its citizens than a monarchy, and thus rewarded one's capacity for self-governance with rights of self-possession.[104] The capacity for self-governance as the basis of whiteness in the Revolutionary era thus also laid out the foundations of racial difference, distinguishing between who could own property, who could *be* property, and whose land was fated to become white's property.[105] As Veracini and Patrick Wolfe both note, the egalitarianism of settler democracy was one that appeared to be an oxymoron to Indigenous people.[106] It was not only premised on the extermination of Indigenous people but upon a corruption of Indigenous philosophy.

The myth of the Lake George birth of the white settler nation parallels several important aspects of this history—with a twist of logic characteristic of settler ideology. In Cooper's telling of the story, the capacity for self-governance is portrayed as an innate quality of settlers, embodied especially by Hawkeye who lives on the frontier unaffected by British conventions. Like the ethereal bond forged by settlers to the land and to each other that transforms them into the "American race," the capacity for self-governance is not learned, but simply appears within Americans as their true instinctive selves. Self-governance is the essential interiority that marks their destiny to inherit the nation from the vanishing Indigenous race. In fact, it was not the nation's territory, but the capacity for self-governance that Haudenosaunee attempted to "hand over" to settlers. While the Haudenosaunee considered self-possession a human right, the capacity for self-governance was also importantly the result of tradition, education, and practice. The

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[104] Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 26-27.

[105] Jacobson, 21.

[106] Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 61; Wolfe, *Traces of History*, 32.

settler misconstruction of the "hand over" contorted the Haudenosaunee philosophy to create a myth of ethereal racial qualities. The Haudenosaunee connection between self-governance and the peaceful coexistence of sovereign nations was transformed by settlers into a version of self-governance that accorded instead with property rights and absolute political power. This distortion also concealed violence under claims of virtue and legal rights; in contrast to Cooper's tale of peaceful handover was the scorched-earth campaign adopted by George Washington's troops during the Revolutionary War. Indian towns across New York State were decimated. Cornfields and orchards that sustained Indigenous civilians were destroyed or overtaken. Following the war, the Revolutionary Army repaid its debts to its own war veterans by taking homelands from the Haudenosaunee that had been previously protected by treaties with the British.[107]

The trend that emerges from placing settler usable pasts side-by-side with Indigenous histories is thus one of abstraction. Where relationships between Indigenous people, nations, and landscapes were developed through time and for practical purposes; for settlers they were abstract qualities that magically appeared upon contact with the mythical space of the frontier. Magical moments and ethereal qualities perform a slight of hand, concealing violence behind virtue, creating parallel stories that are "almost the same but not quite."[108] Accordingly, by reviving Revolutionary era settler origin myths during the 1920s, Stieglitz trod in this same mysterious terrain. With the clouds he put

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[107] Venables, Introduction to U.S. Census, xi-xiv; Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History*, 70, 76-77; Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 155-160, 191, 220; General George Washington ordered his generals to "destroy everything that contributes to [Haudenosaunee] support." Quoted in Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hunting and Empire-Building* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 331.

[108] Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 85-92; Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson, "Settler Colonies," in A Companion to Postcolonial Studies, eds. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 362-363.

down a vague "philosophy of life" that would voice to common people their own innate and humble American virtues. Stieglitz's turn toward photographic abstraction harmonized with the abstracting amnesiac qualities of American origin stories.

Clouds and sky had also communicated a philosophy of life for the Haudenosaunee which they repeated in their oral traditions during winters spent in the longhouses that had once occupied the shores of Lake George. The epic creation story of the Haudenosaunee, often referred to as Skywoman, was told orally over the course of many days and nights.[109] The story describes a world in the sky that predates human civilization on Earth. While the general plot components were common across North America, each of the tribes belonging to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy had their own particular versions which changed over time and with different narrators in response to historical circumstances.[110] The story describes a Skyworld that is populated by villages of magical Indigenous-like beings with the Tree of Life at the center of it. The sky chief Hodahe? ("Standing Tree") was guided by a dream to push his pregnant wife Awenhai:ih ("Fertile Flower" or Skywoman) through a hole beneath the Tree of Life. The turtle and mud upon which Skywoman landed became Turtle Island (current day North America). From the body of Skywoman's daughter was born the foods that sustain the

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[109] William Fenton, *The Great Law and the Longhouse: A Political History of the Iroquois Confederacy* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 34-35. Though there are many variations on the Skywoman story, the general plot and essential elements are consistent across time and various Haudenosaunee tribes. The first recorded version of the story by Gabriel Sagard in 1623 was consistent with versions recorded in the late nineteenth century; The Skywoman story and other stories described here are part of an oral tradition of indigenous pedagogy through which meaning is communicated through "eye contact, body language, gesture, timing, audience response, and the magic of storytelling and performance in the moment, with elements that are improvised, spontaneous, and participatory." Therefore the histories here compiled from ethnographic and indigenous texts are necessarily abstracted and fragmented in their solely textual form. Melissa K. Nelson, "Lighting the Sun of Our Future—How these Teachings Can Provide Illumination," in *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future,* edited by Melissa K. Nelson (Rochester, Vermont: Bear & Company, 2008), 4.

[110] Fenton, *The Great Law*, 39.

Haudenosaunee people: corn, squash, and beans. Later Skywoman's two grandsons, Sky Holder and Flint, embodied dual principles of being: good-minded and evil-minded respectively. Under the guidance of Hodahe?, Sky Holder created Indians from Turtle Island's mud along with all the animals that share the continent with them.[111]

In some recorded Haudenosaunee variations of the story, the sky, as well the act of gazing upon it, had particular significance. Beams of light from the sky represented the guiding light of Hodahe?, the grandfather of the Haudenosaunee people. To gaze upon the sky was to look for wisdom and guidance from Hodahe? and the Skypeople. There was also a reciprocal gaze directed from the sky toward the earth. Hodahe?'s gaze was one of protection and care for the people and creatures of the earth. Significantly, lakes and the sky together composed a unique realm of existence. In the Mohawk variation of the story, the meeting place of the sky with a lake was a portal through which Sky Holder was able to meet his sky chief grandfather in the special underwater realm where Turtle Island and Skyworld overlap. There he received instructions from Hodahe? for creating and stewarding Turtle Island's people, plants, and creatures. The sky over Lake George therefore may have had particular significance to the Haudenosaunee that lived near or traversed the lake. To gaze upon the sky there was to look for wisdom from the grandfather of the people and to feel his caring gaze upon oneself. It was necessary for the Haudenosaunee to constantly return thanks and greetings to the sky from earth in order to remember one's place in life and fulfill one's ethical obligations. Gazing upon and

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111 Fenton, 34-50; Joanne Shenandoah and Douglas M. George, *Skywoman: Legends of the Iroquois* (Santa Fe: Clear Light Publishers, 1998), 1-41; Tehanetorens, *Tales of the Iroquois*, vol. 1 (Mohawk Nation: Akwesasne Notes, 1976), 15-30.

thanking the sky helped one to remember Hodahe?'s "Original Instructions" for land stewardship once dictated at the special meeting place of sky and lake.[112] The sky thus formed an active part of Haudenosaunee governance. Gazing upon the sky above Lake George, or anywhere else in the Haudenosaunee territories, helped to guide civilians to make decisions that safeguarded the livelihood of society and its resources.

Haudenosaunee material culture indicates that the Skywoman creation story was an active part of daily life during the times of early colonial contact through the 1920s. Though the story indicated an ancient history, it also represented a constantly unfolding reality. Embroidery and beadwork depicted the sky as a half-circle over the horizontal line of the horizon (c. 1847, figure 95 and c. 1920s, figure 96). The Tree of Life frequently appeared at the zenith of the sky (c. 1840s, figure 97). The Tree of Life motif repeated frequently in beadwork with patterns that indicated simultaneous inward and outward movement (figure 95). These motifs described the Haudenosaunee belief that Turtle Island was living and constantly expanding through a dynamic living relationship between the earth, sky, and Tree of Life. The Haudenosaunee place in the world was constantly reinforced through a remembrance and acknowledgement of the relationship between earth and sky.[113]

While such representations of the sky would have been understood by modern artists to be naive "primitive" abstractions, they in fact highlight important differences between Indigenous visual culture and white American modernist abstractions. The Haudenosaunee sky was always depicted in its vital relationship to the earthen horizon.

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[112] Fenton, *The Great Law*, 34-50; Shenandoah and George, *Skywoman*, 1-41; Tehanetorens, *Tales of the Iroquois*, 15-30.

[113] Arthur C. Parker, "Certain Tree Myths and Symbols," *American Anthropologist* 14, no. 4. (October-December 1912): 608-620.

Figure 95. Haudenosaunee smoked leather pouch collected by Lewis Henry Morgan, c. 1847. Courtesy of the New York State Museum, catalog #36637.

Figure 96. Detail of skirt, by Mrs. Shongo (Tonawanda Seneca Nation), c. 1920. Courtesy of the New York State Museum, catalog #36434.

Figure 97. Detail of skirt, by Gahano or Caroline Parker (Tonawanda Seneca Nation), c. 1840s. Courtesy of the New York State Museum, catalog #36664.

The Tree of Life always resided at the zenith of the sky's arc because the Haudenosaunee understood Skyworld to be located at the uppermost part of the sky, while the eastern and western sky each had their own particular significance. Each area of the sky behaved in particular ways that indicated that the world was balanced and stable and that Indians were attending properly to their place in the world. For instance, the Thunders—grandfathers who brought crop-sustaining rains and protected against monsters—resided in the western sky. Haudenosaunee prophecies indicated that trouble in the world would be signaled by the sky becoming out of order—the sun rising in the West or the Thunders speaking from the East.[114]

Viewing Haudenosaunee and Stieglitz representations of the sky side by side, brings settler art into the same analytical frame with indigenous art production to make apparent what Damian Skinner calls the "fissures, contradictions, and complexities in settler colonial discourse."[115] Stieglitz's *Equivalents* therefore would have contrasted significantly from the Haudenosaunee "philosophy of life" embodied in their representations of the sky. Stieglitz chose not to include the horizon in the majority of his *Equivalents*, giving no indication as to whether the area of sky depicted was overhead, easterly, or westerly. He frequently rotated his images to further abstract the sky's relationship from the horizon (figure 98, 1929). For the Haudenosaunee the sky only signified a philosophy of life when it was depicted in relationship to the earth and when its particular meaningful spatial locations were clearly indicated. In Haudenosaunee visual culture, Stieglitz's photographs might have appeared particularly emptied of the

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114 Chief Oren Lyons, "A Democracy Based on Peace," in *Original Instructions*, 59; Fenton, *The Great Law*, 46.

115 Damian Skinner, "Settler-Colonial Art History: A Proposition in Two Parts," *Journal of Canadian Art History* 35, no. 1 (2014): 157.

Figure 98. *Equivalent*, by Alfred Stieglitz, 1929.

sky's capacity signify a philosophy of life and its power to guide its people back to their founding principles. By regarding his *Equivalents* as an embodiment of an American philosophy of life, Stieglitz therefore continued the settler project of overwriting the American landscape with white Americans' views of nature in a particularly modernist way—through the aesthetics of abstraction.

Perhaps most poignant in the contrast between each culture's sky-born creation story was the way the sky dictated the nation's relationship with the land below. The divine light from the sky in settler representations of the nation indicated white American's unhampered entitlement to territorial resources. In the Haudenosaunee creation story the sky indicated Hodahe**?**'s Original Instructions, a doctrine for living in a reciprocal relationship with nonhumans in order to foster the continued flourishing of the natural resources that sustained Turtle Island's people. The Original Instructions dictated ethical prescriptions for hunting, harvesting, human relationships, and ceremonies that foregrounded the interdependence of humans, plants, and animals, as well as consideration for sustaining the continent's resources for generations to come. By describing how Indians should live in a relationship to plants and animals with whom they shared Turtle Island, the Original Instructions were therefore also a source of identity for the Haudenosaunee. Indian sociologist Eva Marie Garroutte describes how Original Instructions delineated the proper place of Indians in the world and were therefore not only a source of spiritual and practical knowledge but also a source of self-knowledge and identity.[116] As Dakota historian and theologian Vine Deloria makes clear, this outlined "the proper relationship that the people of the tribe must have with other

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116 Eva Marie Garroutte, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 114-117.

living things and to develop the self-discipline within the tribal community so that man acts harmoniously with other creatures."[117] The capacity for self-governance was thus connected to the capacity for self-restraint in the use of natural resources. To be Haudenosaunee was to be a responsible steward within a creature community who must restrain one's consumption in order to ensure the practical continuance of life on the continent. According to the Original Instructions it was therefore through a relationship *with* Others that Indian identity emerged.

This type of co-emergent identity formed from the Original Instructions also extended to the Haudenosaunee's coexistent relationship with other Indian nations. The Great Law of Peace formed the basis for treaties between the Haudenosaunee and neighboring nations. The Haudenosaunee and their Northern neighbors the Mississauga Nishnaabeg formed a treaty that the Haudenosaunee called the Dish with One Spoon, indicating that both nations were "eating out of the same dish through shared hunting territory and the ecological connections between their territories." The Dish treaty dictated both rights and responsibilities. Each nation was expected to follow the unique Original Instructions dictated by their own ancestors for maintaining the health of shared territories, while also respecting each others' sovereignty to reside on the same territory. In other words, Haudenosaunee protocols of governance conceptualized the possibility that separate nations and ideological traditions could reside upon the same territory if each abided by their own Original Instructions.[118]

Haudenosaunee anticipated that Europeans would join Indigenous nations under similar treaties that followed the Great Law of Peace, allowing for sovereignty, peace, and

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[117] Vine Deloria, Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*, 2d ed. (Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 1994), 88.

[118] Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 114-117.

mutual benefit. During the eighteenth century Haudenosaunee leaders attempted to guide settlers in modeling their union similarly. Onondaga leader Canassatego guided settler governors assembling at Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1744:

> "Our wise forefathers established Union and Amity between the Five Nations. This has made us formidable; this has given us great Weight and Authority with our neighboring Nations. We are a powerful Confederacy; and by observing the same methods, our wise forefathers have taken, you will acquire such Strength and power. Therefore whatever befalls you, never fall out with one another."[119]

As Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson explains of the Haudenosaunee, these methods were not only practices of democratic governance, but practices dictated by the Original Instructions. Each nation was expected to adhere to their own Original Instructions in order to maintain peaceful relationships with each other by sharing and stewarding the land's resources.[120] For the Haudenosaunee the power and strength of national self-determination emerged from adherence to tradition-bound principles of friendship with each other, the natural world, and neighboring nations.

However the white settler self-determination that mythologically emerged around Lake George overshadowed the Original Instructions with an identity that was formed not *with* others, but in distinction *from* Others. While white settler identity also posed a spiritual and practical relationship with the landscape it was based upon the "myth of

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[119] Carl Van Doen and Julian P. Boyd, eds., *Indian Treaties Printed by Benjamin Franklin 1736-1762* (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1938, 75. Quoted in Grinde, Jr. "Iroquois Political Theory," 241.

[120] Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 114-117.

inexhaustibility" rather than self-restraint.[121] As evidenced by Stieglitz's distress over the extinction of the American chestnut species, by the 1920s the myth of inexhaustibility was proving untrue, and with its collapse, national ideology itself appeared under threat. His photographic turn to the sky was unlike the Haudenosaunee gaze upon the sky in remembrance of the Original Instructions. He abstracted the sky from its place in the natural order, gazing upon the sky instead in the hopes of reviving the foundations of a white American self-determination born in racial distinction from Others and with a birthright dominion over the land and its resources.

The origin story of the American nation as a Christian God-endowed settlement dictated their distinct relationship to natural resources and, telling of their founding amnesia regarding Indigenous influence on the Union's formation, also demonstrated their disregard for Haudenosaunee efforts to educate them in forming a strong and powerful union. Potawatomi environmental biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer describes early encounters between Indigenous people and Europeans in which Europeans believed that Indian farmers were indolent and careless because they did not harvest all of their crops. One settler wrote in her journal, "The rice harvest starts with a ceremony of thanksgiving and prayers for good weather for the next four days. They will harvest dawn till dusk for the prescribed four days and then stop, often leaving much rice to stand unreaped. This rice, they say, is not for them but for the Thunders. Nothing will compel them to continue, therefore much goes to waste."[122] Such differing perceptions of harvesting related to each group's origin stories and accordant attitudes about natural

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[121] Settler myths of abundance and inexhaustibility created a particular idea of America as a democratic utopia. It was imagined that America represented a return to an edenic era when "abundance did not require work; consumption was not moderated by self-restraint. All were equal because everyone had all they wanted." Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 160.

[122] Quoted in Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 181.

resources. Settlers believed they had been granted a good fortune by God when they inherited a land of boundless natural resources. To them, to fail make use of every inch of land and every grain of rice was a sin of sloth. They did not recognize that the thriving landscape that they encountered in North America did not result from the spontaneous creation of God but the result of translating the Original Instructions into what Kimmerer describes as "detailed protocols designed to maintain the health and vigor of wildlife species… based on sophisticated ecological knowledge and long-term monitoring of populations."[123] For the Indians of the Great Lakes, leaving rice behind for the Thunders was a practice that followed the guidelines of Honorable Harvest shaped by the Original Instructions. These guidelines decreed people to never take more than half of any resource in order to maintain their reciprocal relationships with nonhumans. By leaving at least half of each harvest, plants could reseed and the beneficial species upon which humans depended could enjoy continued sustenance. These practices were intended to sustain multi-species life on the continent for many generations to come.[124]

Settlers' myths and misunderstandings about the historical origins of the abundant plant and animal species they encountered on Turtle Island guided their treatment of the resources they believed to be untouched and wasted by Indians. Settlers attempted to extract the full potential of each plant, animal, and parcel of land for the purpose of nation-building. Invented during the period of westward expansion, the technology of photography was readily enlisted in the mid-nineteenth century settlement project of assessing the appropriate uses of the nation's resources. As Martin Berger describes in *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture*, Carleton E. Watkins's

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[123] Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, 180-181.

[124] Kimmerer, 175-187.

survey photographs allowed the landscape to be "read" for its proper use in the project of nation building. In Watkins's gallery, photographs of mines sat side-by-side with photographs of breathtaking Yosemite views. The unifying visual frame of the photograph equalized the aesthetic appreciation of attractive tourist locales together with the assessment of the timber or mining value of a parcel of salable land. The camera's view expressed the settler's literacy in viewing landscapes as extractable resources that could be ordered according to their most suitable use for mining, agriculture, housing, or tourism. In this way each tract of land could contribute most fully to the physical and cultural expansion of the American settlement across the continent. As Berger points out, even conservationists in America believed that National Parks were worthy of preservation not necessarily for the sake of plants and animals, but because particular tracts of land were more valuable to the nation as tourist sites than as mines or farms. As tourist sites they were not only profitable, but they were an important cultural resource that provided the ideological basis for settlement.[125] To leave a natural resource "untouched" was therefore not similar to "wasting" rice, but instead a means of extracting its maximum value as a cultural resource for increasing national pride by reminding settlers of their God-granted belonging on the land.

White Americans' visual literacy for assessing natural resources would have seemed distinctly illiterate to Haudenosaunee who might "read" in the landscape for signs of health or unease that revealed how well its stewards had attended to their Original Instructions. Their visual literacy was expressed in the Sky Dome and Tree of Life patterns that constantly adorned Haudenosaunee material culture. If an area was

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125 Martin Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 61-64; Sears, *Sacred Places,* 130.

particularly lush and vibrant it attested to how skillfully its stewards had managed the land, carefully balancing the forces of life and death expressed in the inward and outward spirals of the Tree of Life. If a diseased tree like Stieglitz's chestnut had inspired an Indian to look to the sky, it might have been for assistance in remembering their experiential archive of ecological knowledge housed in Skyworld.

However Stieglitz's accounting of making the *Equivalents* attests to the fact that his photographs were meant to be "read" as part of a national visual text continuous with the settler history of photography. With the sarcastic remark that "clouds were there for everyone—no tax as yet on them—free," he described his modernist photographs as democratic subject matter. While the comment seems on its surface to express his cynicism about capitalism and private property, it in fact attests to his familiarity with settlers' visual assessment of resources. Clouds might not initially seem to fit neatly into such a resource schema because they are ephemeral and unpossessable. However, as Berger points out, white settlers viewed nature through a lens in which the landscape could be "read" for clues as to its best value for the nation. Clouds' very intangibleness did not mean they were not available to be harvested and used for nation-building, but instead that they were untouchable. Such qualities could dictate the exact manner in which they were to be useful to the nation. His statement that clouds are "free" and have not "yet" been taxed acknowledges that clouds had been overlooked as a national resource exactly because they are available to anyone to view and thus useless for capitalism. They are a sight that is necessarily free of charge because it cannot be parceled or controlled or harvested.

His cynicism also spoke particularly to an early twentieth-century audience who may have felt as though everything in the nation had already been purchased and

accounted for following the closing of the frontier in the late nineteenth century. Stieglitz's pioneering "discovery" of a new natural resource that has not yet been mined offered a refreshing renewal of the ideology of freedom that bound settlers together and to the nation's soil. That clouds might never be taxed likewise made them an inexhaustible source of freedom, renewing the myth of inexhaustibility at the heart of the settler's resource-extracting birthright.

Like wilderness areas that were better fit for tourism than mining or farming, Stieglitz found his newly discovered clouds to be more useful as a cultural resource—modern art. He described how the very quality that made them available to everyone —"clouds were there for everyone"—also made them familiar to all Americans, including common Americans who might not be schooled in the appreciation of modern abstract art, but prefer something more familiar like representational landscapes. Because clouds were so quotidian, anyone might understand an abstract photograph that was simultaneously a representational image of a cloud. It could be both appreciated as a photographic representation of a real thing and also as a formal abstraction without any sophisticated training. Clouds could thus produce a distinctly settler modernism because they were both pioneering and spoke to average Americans unlike other forms of abstraction that might only be understood by Europeans and the "elitist" Americans who imitated them.

This is certainly what Stieglitz meant when he said that clouds embodied his "philosophy of life." They expressed in art everything important to the revived settler ideology he shared with his milieu—freedom, pioneering, humbleness, the ethereal bond of settlers, the inexhaustible landscape granted to settlers by God, and the distinction of settlers from Europeans.

Stieglitz's photographic method here can be seen as a method of preserving resources that embodied the settler's uniform attitude toward extraction and conservation as a means of securing a site's maximum value. Though it was certainly no longer the moment of nation building in which Watkins worked, for the Second Stieglitz Circle, perceived threats to the nation called for a time of uplift and renewal of Americans' relationship to their origins. Stieglitz's realization of the potential of his cloud discovery prompted him to work with "great excitement—daily for weeks."[126] This feverish photographing lasted for nearly a decade, producing several hundred more cloud photographs than he had made of any prior subject in his career.[127] Stieglitz appeared to harvest as many clouds as possible, preserving them on film, and dramatically manipulating their exposure so they might yield the maximum benefit to the nation. He revived photography's role in nation-building by turning natural resources into a modernist wellspring of national pride.

In Susan Freinkel's account of the history of the American chestnut, she describes how Americans deeply affected by the extinction of the tree were often overtaken by what has been deemed "chestnut fever." This mocking name for an affliction described the distinct way that chestnut conservationists were commonly overcome by a perceived need to save and preserve scraps of chestnut wood. Freinkel documented one wealthy Pennsylvania businessman who collected every piece of chestnut wood, product, and tchotchke he could find in the forest or store, accumulating piles of wood and adorning his entire estate in chestnut furniture and objects.[128] That the chestnut seems to uniquely

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[126] Stieglitz, "How I came to Photograph Clouds," 237.

[127] Greenough, *The Key Set*, xliii-xliv.

[128] Freinkel, *American Chestnut,* 4-6.

inspire such behavior accords to its association with common humble Americans believed to be "rooted" in the American soil. Conservationists' impassioned attitudes toward the American chestnut functioned to confirm the settler's role as heir and steward of the great American landscape bestowed upon the nation by God. However, this performance of preservation in fact masks the destruction of extraction—also the result of the settler's belief in a God-granted inheritance. The ravenous spirit by which the nation's resources had been decimated was reshaped into the spirit of preservation—a seeming "madness" hell-bent upon efficiently preserve every last splinter of chestnut. Similar to the logic of over-harvesting that seemed uninformed and senseless to the Haudenosaunee, the settler model of preservation was unhinged from ecological knowledge. Saving scraps of wood cannot bring the tree back from extinction, but instead fulfill an ideological desire for identification and nostalgia. Similarly Stieglitz's grief-stricken act to preserve Lake George's clouds was not a practical remedy to the destruction of natural resources or disintegration of the nation.

## A Postcard from *The Steerage* to White America

Stieglitz was diligent in his efforts to ensure that photographic modernism would be an art of the common people. His origin narrative of the dying humble chestnut hero and the free-for-anyone easily comprehensible images of clouds was matched to a newfound renunciation of artistic technique—again embodied in the idea of the snapshot. Despite the intense effort and skillful distortions of exposure required to make his "philosophy of life" match the photographic appearance of clouds, Stieglitz stressed

their absolute lack of technical mediation and refinement. His "How I Came to Photograph Clouds" narrative described the *Equivalents* as "straight photographs, all gaslight paper, except one palladiotype. All in the power of every photographer of all time," declaring, "My aim is increasingly to make my photographs look so much like photographs that unless one has *eyes* and *sees*, they won't be seen—and still everyone will never forget them having once looked at them."[129] The vision of modernism that Stieglitz laid out professed to be profoundly democratic, again attesting to his affinity with the common American. He describes the photographs as having so little artistry—printed on the most common of paper of the most common subject and so faithful to their subject —that one might fail to "see" them. In other words, they might look so much like their subject or might be so common, that one might fail to distinguish them from actual and ordinary reality. They could in fact be said to be the photographic "equivalent" of the philosophy of self-governance, for they embodied the idea that modernist photography was an innate quality of the American landscape that could be plainly seen; and that the capacity to make or appreciate modernist photographs was available to any American.

The ordinariness of the *Equivalents* was emphasized through Stieglitz's choice of photographic paper. Diverging from decades of making delicate photogravure prints intended to prove photography's fit with other fine arts, Stieglitz now printed on Kodak postcard paper. This paper was specifically designed to allow average consumers and snapshooters to make their own picture postcards, building upon the picture postcard craze that swept the Western world during the early twentieth century. Stieglitz insisted that he could turn "poor innocent postal card paper" into "a living thing of beauty" to

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[129] Stieglitz, "How I Came to Photograph Clouds," 237-238; "Gaslight paper" was the nickname for photographic paper manufactured for amateurs that could easily be developed with dim artificial lighting and without the use of a darkroom.

prove that the success of his photographs was not dependent upon elite materials.[130] Richard Whelan points out that Stieglitz likely adopted postcard stock after receiving criticism of his 1921 exhibition of portraits of O'Keeffe, that his "impressions are printed luxuriously upon the rarest papers to secure a richness of effect that must always lie beyond the appreciation of the multitude."[131] While Stieglitz had decades earlier advertised his work in exactly such a manner, by the 1920s, "luxury" embarrassingly associated him with everything that the Second Stieglitz Circle opposed. It grouped him with the affected class of artists who imitated European artists and were out of touch with the more real passions and "pure trash" of ordinary Americans. By printing them on postcard paper Stieglitz was able to proudly describe them to viewers at his gallery: "They are snapshots of clouds made with a hand camera and printed on ordinary postal-card paper."[132]

It is meaningful that Stieglitz chose Kodak postcard paper instead of common silver gelatin papers. While silver gelatin paper was also democratic—used widely by artists, professionals, and amateurs alike—postcard paper was decisively the material of popular culture. It tied his work both to snapshot photography and the postcard craze of the early twentieth century in a way that would secure his place among the modernist avant-garde, for whom the material of popular culture was increasingly entering the gallery. As new media scholar Monica Cure points out, even though the postcard may seem anodyne and quaint to twenty-first century audiences, it was in fact the new media of its day. It was marked by the surprise, delight, and fear it aroused. Its cheapness, ease,

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[130] Whelan quoting Stieglitz in *Stieglitz on Photography*, 240.

[131] McBride quoted by Whelan, *Stieglitz on Photography*, 228.

[132] Conversation recorded by Seligmann, February 26, 1926. Seligmann, *Alfred Stieglitz Talking*, 63.


Figure 99. (recto and verso) Postcard advertisement sent to Ethel Burtner, by Kodak Eastman Company, 1913. Wayne P. Ellis Kodakiana Collection, Duke University.

and immediacy related it to the vulgar visual tastes of the working classes.[133] These were exactly the kinds of qualities that the Second Stieglitz Circle related to the "purity" and authenticity of common Americans and the media that they consumed. By printing on postcard stock, Stieglitz conceptualized American modernist photography as a democratic art that could be readily and easily consumed.

The photographic postcard also uniquely fit with Stieglitz's goals for modernist photography because it was associated with emotional immediacy. Though postcards were invented in the 1870s, they did not truly flourish in the United States until the early twentieth century when the lifting of government regulation allowed individuals and businesses to produce their own cards.[134] A 1913 Kodak advertisement (figure 99) made clear the heightened sense of democracy and emotional contact the postcard represented. The advertisement was mailed directly to the consumer as an intimate correspondence between the Kodak girls pictured with their cameras on the front. The hand-written text on the back speaks directly from the Kodak girls to the consumer: "You can do it all. No dark room. Simple all the way. Let us show you." The girls' signature on the front of the card assures that the girls not only appear in the image, but have authored it, touched it, and deliberately sent it to "you," the recipient. The hand written note on the back seals the promise of intimacy, offering to "show you" how simple it is to make postcards and send them to loved ones. The promotional card demonstrates all of the immediacy and democracy the consumer can hope to experience by making and sending their own postcards.

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[133] Monica Cure, *Picturing the Postcard: A New Media Crisis at the Turn of the Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 4.

[134] Cure, *Picturing the Postcard,* 15.

Photographic postcards were especially treasured as souvenirs because they were considered to be accurate representations of the places one had experienced. The immediacy of the photograph was heightened by the postcard's unique form of abbreviated correspondence, which was believed to offer a heightened and direct intimacy between sender and receiver. The "divided back" that appeared on the promotional postcard was introduced in 1902, allowing senders to write both message and address on the "back" of the card, whereas previously message appeared on the same side as the image. Monica Cure reports that this move elevated the primacy of the image, precipitating a postcard collecting craze on par with that of cartes de visite collecting of the prior century.[135] It was believed that the postcard uniquely was able to convey the totality of a person's inner and outer reality. A poem printed in *The Picture Postcard* journal in 1902 describes the belief that a postcard had a mystical capacity to contain the sum total of a person's experience:

> I cannot write a letter dear, nor would its pages bring
> The thousand thoughts towards you that are ever on the wing:
> And I should need a magic pen to place before your eyes
> In all its fullest beauty the scene that round me lies:
> So I trust the picture postcard I send to you to-day
> My thoughts, love, and surroundings, in one message convey.[136]

The writer describes the idea that the postcard delivered together the direct experience of the sender's environment and interior thoughts and feelings. Bringing the

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135 Cure, 21; Robert Bogdan and Todd Welsch, *Real Photo Postcard Guide: The People's Photography* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 2-20.

136 Beatrix F. Creswell, "To My Friend," *The Picture Postcard: A Magazine of Travel, Philately, Art* 3, no. 25 (1902): 110, cited in Cure, *Picturing the Postcard,* 28.

photograph together with a short correspondence and postage stamp, heightened the perception of the photograph as a direct physical trace of its subject.

Since photography's invention, the fact that an image was produced from light that had once touched the photograph's subject made it seem as if the photograph had a haptic relation to its subject. As Geoffrey Batchen describes, throughout the history of photography, the intimacy and emotional appeal of photographs was frequently heightened by elements that confirmed a sense of embodied touch.[137] The postcard heightened this haptic relationship because it was mailed directly from the site at which the photograph was made to a loved one. A physical relationship between the sightseer, the photograph, and the subject was believed to arrive into the hands and before the eyes of the receiver. The direct physical relation of the site on the front of the postcard was backed by emotions expressed on the other side of the postcard, combining physical, emotional, and visual experiences into one.

Stieglitz drew on this sense of heightened physical, emotional, and visual experience in his formulation of the terms of modernist photography in the 1920s. In "How *The Steerage* Happened," Stieglitz professed that he "saw a picture of shapes and underlying that the feeling I had about life." It was "a vision that held me,—people, the common people, the feeling of ship and ocean and sky and the feeling of release."[138] This sense of a haptic relationship between forms on the front of an image and feelings on the back were reflected in Stieglitz's statement. In the 1920s Stieglitz wanted to emphasize the idea that the modernist photograph could "Give voice to [one's] own soul."[139] The

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[137] Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004).

[138] Stieglitz, "How *The Steerage* Happened," 127-131. [Check specific page numbers]

[139] Rolland, "America and the Arts," 48-49.

postcard delivered a view of the physical shape of life on one side and feelings about life on the other. For the *Equivalents* therefore the intimate form of the postcard could uniquely communicate a correspondence between an image and its underlying emotion. The form of the postcard turned a machine-made art into an intimate image that uniquely communicated that *Stieglitz himself* had directly experienced the views that appeared on the postcard's surface; and indicated that the viewer could readily experience it all as well.

The postcard as a modernist medium was made additionally meaningful by the fact that Stieglitz's *Equivalents* pictured the skies above Lake George. Postcards were frequently purchased at tourist locations such as Lake George that were infused with the cultural history of the United States.[140] Stieglitz certainly meant for the direct experience of the birthplace of the American race to travel far and wide as a direct emotional reminder of the ethereal ties that bound white Americans to each other and to the American soil. Stieglitz's contemporaries would have understood the postcard as a form of communication that bound Americans together across lines of social, economic, and ethnic difference. The postcard was both praised and scorned for being "socially promiscuous" in its capacity to bring together people from various social spheres in a form of virtual contact. This democratizing of postal communication dovetailed with Stieglitz's desire that his photographs cross lines of social difference to be comprehensible to common Americans. Some feared that the limited writing space and lowered cost not only allowed the working classes to participate in correspondence with little money or education, but that it would also result in lowering the linguistic standards of the middle

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[140] Bogdan and Welsch, *Real Photo Postcard Guide*, 2.

and upper classes.[141] The postcard thus dovetailed with eugenicists' concerns about the working classes degrading American whiteness. However the Second Stieglitz Circle would have been invigorated by the sensual idea of the postcard's "social promiscuity" for the ways it fit with their celebration of the immediacy of cheap "pure trash" popular arts that appealed to common Americans.

The postcard as Stieglitz's 1920s photographic material of choice makes clear how we might understand the *Equivalents*, his hindsight interpretation of *The Steerage*, and what he envisioned as modernist photography toward by end of his career. According to Stieglitz, modernist photography was a formal language backed by the direct emotional experience of the photographer. As Sekula argues of Stieglitz's account of making *The Steerage:*

> The photograph is invested with a complex metonymic power, a power that transcends the perceptual and passes into the realm of affect. The photograph is believed to encode the totality of an experience, to stand as a phenomenological equivalent of Stieglitz-being-in-that-place.[142]

Like the postcard, Stieglitz imagined that the modernist photograph could transfer the direct experience of the photographer to his viewers. Additionally, the modernist photograph was imagined to be something intensely democratic in its capacity to be legible by all classes of people—anyone who "has *eyes* and *sees*." It could therefore serve as a mode of direct emotional communication about American life capable of reviving the instincts and emotions that bound white Americans to each other and to the settler nation.

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[141] Cure, *Picturing the Postcard,* 9.

[142] Sekula, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning," 14.

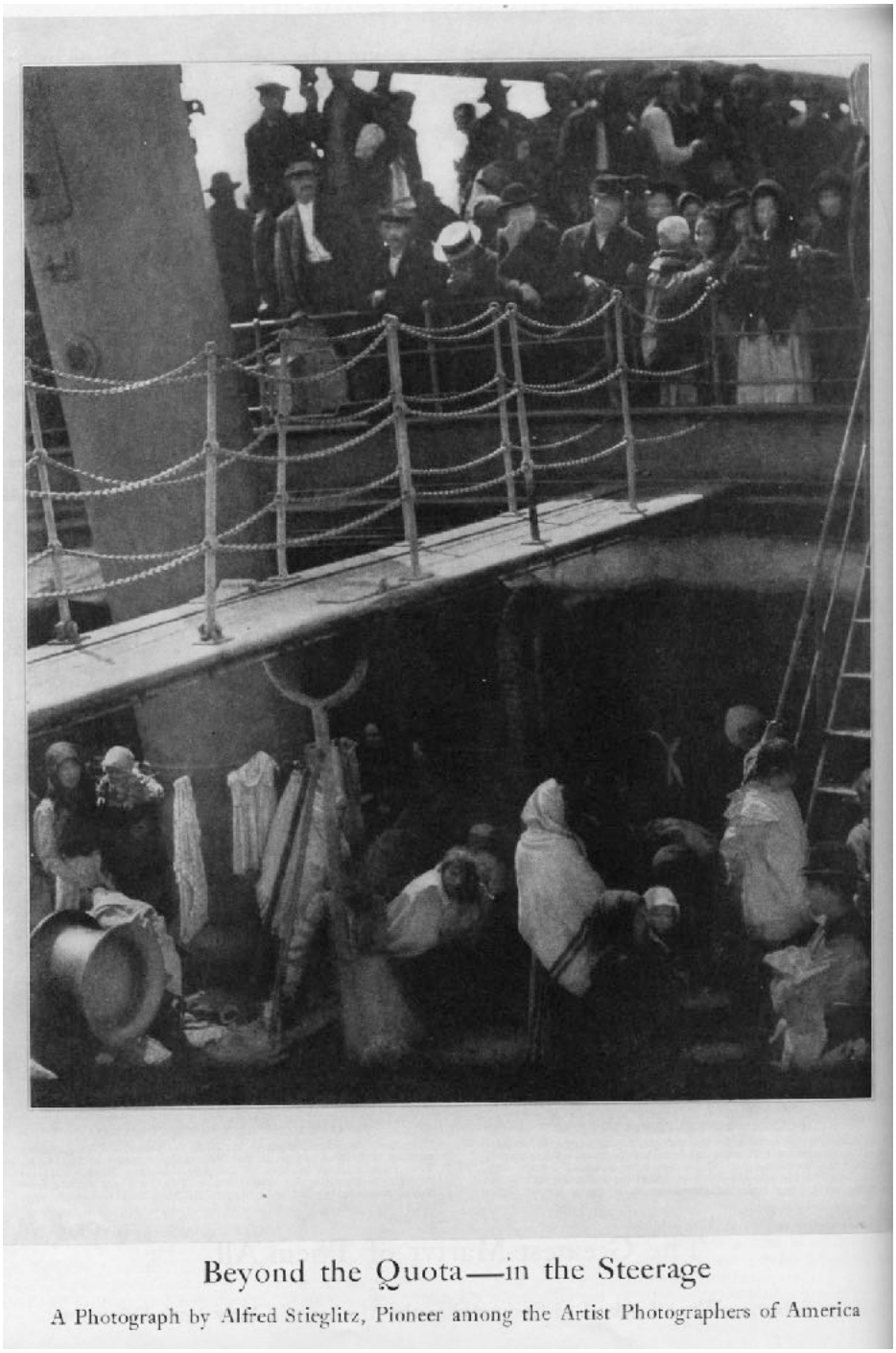


Figure 100. *The Steerage,* by Alfred Stieglitz, 1907, as published in "Beyond the Quota —in the Steerage," *Vanity Fair*, August 1924.

Stieglitz seems to have imagined that *The Steerage* might engender such a revival when he licensed the photograph's reproduction in *Vanity Fair* a few months after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924 (figure 100). The magazine's textual framing realized his more recent understanding of the image as an emotional appeal. Instead of appearing with its title, the photograph was captioned, "Beyond the Quota—in the Steerage." The by-line elaborated, "A Photograph by Alfred Stieglitz, Pioneer among the Artist Photographers of America." The *Vanity Fair* caption suggested that the 1907 immigrants who were most likely making an annual summer journey to Europe were in fact 1924 immigrants turned away at a port of entry once the nation's quotas had been fulfilled.[143] As the photograph appeared only one month after the Johnson-Reed Act took effect, contemporary readers of the magazine likely regarded the caption as metaphor rather than fact.[144] However it also deliberately touched upon the heightened emotions people had about immigration quotas leading up to and following the law's passage. The caption suggests that Stieglitz was pained at the sight of immigrants denied the experience of freedom shared in common by whites in America. By urging viewers to similarly lament their plight, the caption forged a sympathy between photographer, subject, and viewer, and helped to bring about a sense of identification between white Americans and current-day European immigrants.

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[143] For further discussion of the immigrants' likely destinations, see chapter one; See also McCauley, "Making of a Modernist Myth," 36-45; Lauren Kroiz, *Creative Composites: Modernism, Race, and the Stieglitz Circle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 6-7; It is likely that the caption was written by Stieglitz's friend and editor of *Vanity Fair* Frank Crowninshield. However it was frequently the case that Stieglitz influenced the manner in which his photographs were discussed and what meaning writers and editors attributed to them. Correspondence between Stieglitz and Crowninshield, box 188, folder 3159, YCAL.

[144] United States Congress, Chapter 190, Section 31.

In Waldo Frank's rationalization of immigration in *Our America*, regardless of ethnic origin European immigrants to America belonged to the "uniformity of the American type." These immigrants bore an "inner character" that had marked them always-already as "aliens" in their birthplaces, prompting them to set their sights on America as their true home. Contrasting his "American type" to both the "scientific" racial categories of "Britons, Latins, Celts and Teutons" and the melting pot conception of "the compound," Frank described the American race as something ineffably more natural than biology. He believed that the Earth itself sensed the innate American interiority of proto-Americans who were not born in America but were destined to be settlers. Waldo imagined that the forces of weather brought settlers to the American shore as immigrants, cleansed them of their Europeanness, and cultivated the blossoming of their American nature through contact with the special features of the American landscape:

> "It suffices to take the Spaniard, admittedly quite Spanish as he leaves Castile, and to understand how the great winds of egress that blew him across the Ocean, and the great blasts of adventure which blazed a trail with his body across mountain and prairie-land and desert, worked upon his nature: made him at length a Spaniard no longer, but something else, something American."[145]

Frank goes on to describe how the ethereal bond between early Americans was formed across ethnic lines of difference, as "the unchastened continent worked primitively and brutally upon its suitors:"

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[145] Waldo Frank, *Our America,* 17.

> "[They] were moved by a common mastering impulse, were confronted by common, mastering conditions: and they answered in common specific ways. In manner and in psychology, the initial impulse and the experience that followed made these men brothers. They fought each other; they had no common speech; they made prayers and swore oaths each to private and distant Gods and Kings. But they were brothers nevertheless. They were that distinct and still unchartered creature: the American Pioneer."[146]

Frank's usable past history describes the process by which whites believed that early settlers had been transformed into Americans as the frontier experience brought forth a selfhood and brotherhood already innate within them. In other words, the transformation was not so much a change as it was an uncovering of a preexisting racial unity. Such usable pasts were not intended as mere documentation of history, but in the hopes that similar histories might be rehashed in contemporary America. Frank described the contemporary nation as the "American jungle" hoping to inspire people to recognize the savage frontier roots that could again uncover Americans' preexisting pioneer brotherhood. Articulating the primal origins of the nation might help readers to sort the nation's authentic character from the evils of affectation, imitation, and false religion.

The immigrants crowded onto the steerage decks with a fraudulent caption in *Vanity Fair* composed a similar kind of usable past. Stieglitz now encouraged viewers to apprehend the image as an American origin story. The modern forms of the ship's architecture and the multiethnic forms of Europe's "ancient races" brought past and

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[146] Waldo Frank, 18.

present together in a way that was now useful for Stieglitz's brand of modernism.[147] Stieglitz's description of his vision for a photograph that united "the common people" with the "feeling of ship and ocean and sky" and "the feeling of release… from the mob called the rich" not only conjured the emotional immediacy of the postcard, but also paralleled Frank's description of the nation's first settlers. By finding sympathy with these proto-Americans, viewers might apprehend the fact of the varied ethnicities of the immigrants, but also understand them as already estranged from Europe. In common with Stieglitz who has just detangled himself from *nouveaux riches*, they feel the enlivening "brisk wind" at the front of the ship, as if their American interiority has been sensed by the same earthly elements that push the ship forward. Huddled together on the ship as "common people" in felt sympathy with photographer and viewer, they are seen as in the process of uniting together. Though they may have "no common speech" and swear oaths "each to private and distant Gods and Kings," they are "moved by a common mastering impulse" to become self-governing settlers. Stieglitz's narrative about "shapes" animated by "the feeling [he] had about life" in the 1920s thus described how the visual facticity of straight modernist photography could be put in service of ideologically constructed histories.

The Second Stieglitz Circle believed that contemporary European immigrants were the most pure of modern Americans. They were the most like the pioneers, who upon contact with the American shore were stripped of all their European traditions and affectations in the struggle to survive in an untamed land. By describing his identification with the immigrants and his own sympathetic embodiment of the primitive emotions

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147 For discussion of Stieglitz's perception of the immigrants as "ancient European races," see chapter one.

and instincts they were believed to personify, Stieglitz made clear that he too was a part of this kind of American "purity" of "pure trash" and vulgarity that has instincts and emotions and sexual virility. And furthermore, by photographing them in a way that gave voice to his own soul through their visual forms, the photograph might uplift the nation, deeming him not just a pioneer but "Pioneer among the Artist Photographers of America."

Whether the immigrants were indeed "beyond the quota" or embarking on an excursion was insignificant. False connections between visual facts and ideological histories were justified by the nationalist purpose of the usable past. Ideologically constructed truths *felt* true because they explored the primitive instincts believed to suffuse humble American life. Historical accuracy was thus irrelevant to the "truth" of Stieglitz's 1920s straight photography. The primitivism of abstraction instead came together with the direct truth of Stieglitz's felt experience and the emotional appeal made to American viewers, kindling the awakening of their own humble and authentic settler selves. The immigrants' "shapes" emptied of their actual histories and filled instead with Stieglitz's deepest "feelings about life" embodied the meaningful slippage between historical facts and ideological truths where the Second Stieglitz Circle positioned the project of American modernism.

Stieglitz's "feelings about life" were his deeply felt dedication to his milieu's vision for American life. His reinterpretation of the racial identity of the steerage passengers from a "hoard of shuffled races" to "the American race" represented an attempt to guide Americans toward a more egalitarian and unpretentious future consistent with their settler heritage. That Stieglitz himself might have seen in the 1920s an image of white proto-Americans where he once saw a melange of Europe's ancient races attests to the

flexibility of whiteness as a racial category. However he forged this transformation by turning to myths about the origins of the American settlement, the ethereal bonds between whites during the Revolutionary Era, and their special relationship to the land. This passage of *The Steerage* through settler mythology demonstrates the ideological bounds of whiteness's flexibility in the United States as a settler nation. Stieglitz's reinterpretation of the race of the passengers anticipated seemingly benign and inclusive statements like John F. Kennedy's 1958 dubbing of the country as "A Nation of Immigrants." Such concepts posed liberal acceptance of racially diverse citizens as a continuation of the nation's colonial legacy while simultaneously erasing Indigenous history and presence from the nation.[148]

During the same era that Stieglitz's image made this transformation of signification, Indians' lives and status in American life also underwent transformation. The revival of Cooper's conception of white settler identity was matched by a popular revival of "last Indian" myths and realities with stories about the death of Ishi "the last Indian" in California, popular imagery of the "vanishing Indian," and the erection of *The End of the Trail* monument depicting a dying Indian.[149] On the other hand boarding schools; the destruction of Indian culture, language, and familial ties; lack of employment opportunities; ongoing traumas; and broken treaties continuing the dispossession of Indians from their lands caused Lakota author Standing Bear to declare that early twentieth century Indians were "herded under every possible disadvantage and

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[148] John F. Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants* (New York: Anti-defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1959).

[149] Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous People's History*, 161.

obstruction to progress until the race should pass out from sheer physical depletion."[150] Though Indian culture certainly resisted, persisted, and thrived, because as Simpson describes, "my family, like every Indigenous family, did whatever they could to ensure that I survived the past four hundred years of violence."[151] However to whites in the 1920s the projects of extermination and assimilation of Indigenous civilians appeared to be complete.

Stieglitz's new rendering of *The Steerage* fostered the settler amnesia that accompanied Indigenous "disappearance." As recent waves of European immigrants were absorbed into a new conception of monolithic whiteness, earlier acts of settlement were reconfigured as merely a type of immigration.[152] Stieglitz's image of immigrants joined in orchestrating a new cultural memory in which all settler-immigrants shared identical narratives in their identity formation, having supposedly passed through similar stages of assimilation—first oppressed in Europe, then arriving in America where they were transformed by the struggle to survive, and finally assimilating into a shared inborn American whiteness that benefited from the free use of abundant natural resources and the rights of private property. That Stieglitz's 1920s narrative version of the image would become canonized in the history of photography thus acted in concert with the

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150 Roger L. Nichols, *Indians in the United States and Canada: A Comparative History*, Second Edition (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 285.

151 Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 9.

152 The "nation of immigrants" narrative is a three-fold narrative transfer. One is to eclipse the fact of indigenous presence before settlers' arrival, which also ignores founding acts of violence and dispossession. Another is to make it appear as if immigrants and settlers alike sought refuge from oppression in the United States. A third is to propose that everyone in the nation is equal and enjoys the same rights and privileges. See Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 42-46; Laura Schaefli and Anne Godlewska, "Social Ignorance and Indigenous Exclusion: Public Voices in the Province of Quebec, Canada," *Settler Colonial Studies* 4, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 227–244.

fabrication of such cultural memories. The repeated telling of the photograph's history conjured its paradoxically dual temporality, preserving both the moment of the nation's most intense discrimination against European immigrants and the dramatization of that moment from the perspective of the 1920s. It thus confirmed the immigrants' status as historically oppressed at once with their attainment of the promises of settler freedom. It seemed to be a photographic document of the mythos of monolithic whiteness. The immigrants on the ship appear perpetually as a memory of whites' ancestors, while they also face toward a future that is the viewer's present: contemporary whites' freedoms and privileges.

During this period Stieglitz also reconfigured other stories about his oeuvre in a similar fashion. He described how he had made his most influential photographs—*Winter—Fifth Avenue* and *The Terminal*—to create a teleological timeline in which a deep affinity for common working-class Americans appeared to have always been at the core of Stieglitz's version of art photography. These narratives had remarkably similar narrative structures in which groundbreaking moments in photography emerged from moments of oppression in his life. He recalled members of the Society of Amateur Photographers responding to the sight of *Winter—Fifth Avenue*:

> "They all laughed and said, 'For God's sake, Stieglitz, throw that damned thing away. It's all blurred and not sharp.'
>
> And I replied, 'This is the beginning of a new era.' "

The very next day he came upon the scene that would become *The Terminal*:

> "A driver in a rubber coat was watering his steaming horses. There seemed to be something related to my deepest feeling in what I saw, and I decided to photograph what was within me."[153]

These usable pasts bring Stieglitz's felt identification with common Americans together with the struggle for photography's recognition as a fine art. The story supposes that Stieglitz—"Pioneer of American Photography"—fought for the recognition of photography in the same way that settlers struggled to survive on the continent. American photography is proposed, at its roots, to have always been about the common American—who is both photographer and subject. This myth states that photography itself suffered intense hardship and oppression in the face of those whose ideals were foreign to the American soil—those who maintained their allegiances to affected European conventions. However by reconfiguring in retrospect that these photographs were always clear-seeing in their vision of humble American identity, the myth supposes the idea that American photography had a destiny to become what it was, that its nature both preexisted its hardships and yet was also forged by those hardships. Stieglitz himself is thus configured as an honest worker who performed "camera work" as if he were humbly performing working-class labor. (Sherwood Anderson even described Stieglitz as a "city plowman," likening him to an old man who had naturally merged with his environment after decades of humbly plowing the fields.)[154] Thus the ultimate meaning of modernist straight photography was writ particularly American in professing an honesty that was not the honesty of facts but the honesty of honest work, of persistence

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[153] Dorothy Norman, "Writings and Conversations of Alfred Stieglitz," *Twice A Year*, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 1938), 97.

[154] Sherwood Anderson, "City Plowman," *American & Alfred Stieglitz*, 146-148.

in the face of adversity, of unpretentious art. It was an art made by and for the common people to express the truth of their common amnesiac form of vision.

# Conclusion: Beyond Settler Modernism

I would like to propose an alternative photograph to serve as an anchor for photographic modernism. Kiowa photographer Horace Poolaw's image of Kiowa friends and family members posing in a Lincoln Model L Touring Sedan (figure 101, c. 1930-1931) was made around the same time Stieglitz dictated his *Steerage* origin story. The image pictures eight men and women facing the camera. Two of the men wear warbonnets, while the women don headbands. Their convertible Model L is shiny and fashionable. Behind them the landscape is populated with cars and teepees. The perspective is straightforward. The composition demonstrates a deliberate use of shapes and negative space.

Like *The Steerage* this image produces divergent meanings for different viewers in different eras. To some viewers it may appear as mismatched as the immigrants in Stieglitz's photograph once looked against the shiny steel architecture of the *Kaiser Wilhelm II*. Viewed through the settler lens that pictures Indigenous people as a prehistoric dying breed, these subjects seem out of place in a top-level luxury vehicle. From this settler perspective, the poles and triangles of the teepees appear startlingly modernist as formal shapes that compare with wheel spokes and round tires. To other viewers the photograph might evidence that Kiowa people underwent their own process of becoming modern subjects by adopting modern technologies and habits. American exhibitions have often framed Poolaw's work us such.[1] This perspective appears to be

[1] See for example "The Photographs of Horace Poolaw" (1998) at the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, and the 1990-1994 traveling exhibition of the Poolaw Collection at Stanford University. Laura E. Smith, *Horace Poolaw, Photographer of American Indian Modernity* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), xviii-xix.

Figure 101. (left to right) Bruce Poolaw (Kiowa), Caroline Bosin (Kiowa), Gladys Parton (Kiowa), unidentified man, Mertyl Berry (Kiowa), Hannah Keahbone (Kiowa), Barbara Louise Saunkeah (Kiowa), and Jasper Saunkeah (Kiowa) in a Lincoln Model L, near the farmers market, Oklahoma City, c. 1930-1931.

more egalitarian in acknowledging that Indigenous people, like whites, are also modern subjects who adopted modern lifestyles. From this perspective, the Lincoln Touring Sedan confirms their place in the thrall of consumerism just before feeling the effects of the encroaching Great Depression.

However as Mohawk scholar Laura E. Smith points out, during the 1930s warbonnets signified movements for indigenous sovereignty and cultural revitalization.[2] Picturing and posing with warbonnets in a Model L therefore likely exceeded picturing the mere adoption of modernity—or even the formation of a distinct Indigenous modernity. Poolaw instead pictures what Audra Simpson calls a "refusal" of settler ideology. Simpson explains that Indigenous refusal is both the refusal "to go away, to cease to be," but also the refusal to be visibly "different" in "terms that are sufficient to the settlers' legal eye."[3] As such refusal represents the recognition that Indigenous existence is not tethered to settler norms.[4] Mark Rifkin follows Simpson in his argument for moving beyond contemplating Indigenous people's choices to participate in modernity and identify as modern. He proposes instead a disruption of the settler temporal framework that classifies the arrival of settler modernity as a temporal break in Indigenous life. By removing that settler timeframe, Rifkin encourages the appreciation of Indigenous peoples' ongoing self-governance and cultural persistence.[5]

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[2] Smith, *Horace Poolaw,* 71.

[3] Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 22.

[4] Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus,* 11.

[5] Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2017), 15.

From that perspective, rather than judge Poolaw's image against the terms of modernism written by Stieglitz and his milieus, the photograph becomes legible as part of a continuous Indigenous visual culture. The negative space of the landscape foreground and sky above become the material and spiritual cloth of centuries of unbroken Indigenous history. Each object within the photograph might be regarded as a significant article of Kiowa life, each entering the visual field with commensurate meaning. Each person, in their impudent insistence to face the camera, becomes legible as one of the ancestors like Leanne Betasomasake Simpson's, who "did whatever they could to ensure that I survived the past four hundred years of violence."[6] Characteristic of the contrast between settler and indigenous narratives, Poolaw's photograph is not an origin story, but instead a story of the ongoing fabric of time, land, and relationships.

Interpreting Poolaw's image in this way, suddenly *The Steerage* appears strange once again. Stieglitz's image belongs to the much shorter and illogical timeframe of settler time; a timeframe that distorted the vision of time and place and populations in ways that made Indigenous existence seem profoundly out of place—yet failed.

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6 Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 9.

## Archival Collections

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The Lewis Henry Morgan Collection of Mid-Nineteenth Century Iroquois Objects, New York State Museum

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The Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Art Institute of Chicago

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